



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing
The Fountain of Youth? The Quest for Aging Therapies

September 15, 2022

Good morning.

Thank you, Chairman Foster, for holding today's hearing on geroscience, a field with the potential to transform our society. A field which challenges what many have assumed is a universal truth – that aging is immutable.

The significance of what we will be discussing at this hearing cannot be overstated. I had a twenty-year career as a nurse, and from that experience, I know firsthand the challenges of compounding illnesses in seniors – on both the patient and on our health care systems.

I like to say that the Science, Space, and Technology Committee is the committee of the future. Today's discussion is just one more chapter in the Science Committee legacy of looking over the horizon:

In the mid-1970s, under Chairman Olin Teague of Texas, the Science Committee held the first hearings on the threat of climate change.

In 1979, the Committee under Chairman Don Fuqua of Florida took the first look at the opportunities and risks associated with technology transfer to China.

In 2010, Chairman Gordon of Tennessee led hearings on geoengineering, where the very notion of carbon removal was first introduced to Congress. Now, twelve years later, we have provided \$3.5 billion dollars to the Department of Energy through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in order to stand up technology hubs for direct air capture.

Those previous hearings were important because they provided an opportunity to start needed public discourse on critical issues, no matter how futuristic they might appear. As one ancient Greek philosopher said, "the only constant in life is change." We need to be prepared for those changes.

If geroscience succeeds in its grandest promises, there will be a host of ethical questions to consider. This hearing gives us a chance to examine some of those questions. It also gives us the chance to set the stage for a productive and positive conversation on aging. For too long, aging

has been a negative word or something to fear. However, we all age. We cannot stop time. I am pleased that the consensus in the scientific community is that we don't need to chase immortality. What we need to do is increase our healthy years and mitigate the health concerns brought on by age. And we need to ensure equal and affordable access to the tools and therapeutics that increase everyone's healthspan.

On the wall on our hearing room in the Rayburn Building is a quote from Alfred Lord Tennyson:

*“For I dipped into the future, Far as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the world, And all the wonder that would be.”*

I am proud that today's hearing will once again dip into the future and try to see a vision of what's to come.

I yield back.