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

Chairwoman Johnson (D-TX)

Joint Hearing of
Environment and Research & Technology Subcommittees:
Forever Chemicals: Research and Development for Addressing the PFAS Problem

December 7, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill and Chairwoman Stevens for having this important hearing on PFAS research and development.

As my colleagues mentioned, these chemicals are widely-used and dangerous for our health.

Nearly half a million Texans live within three miles of sites where groundwater has been contaminated by PFAS. Many of these sites are former and active military bases near Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio. Firefighting foam containing PFAS has been in use on military bases since the 1970s. This has led to PFAS contamination at much higher levels than what the CDC deems safe. For decades, residents near thousands of military bases around the country have unknowingly showered, cooked with, and drunk contaminated water.

The alarming reality is that virtually all Americans have been exposed to PFAS. Research shows many pathways for human exposure to these chemicals, including contaminated drinking water, soil, air, and food.

Contamination by PFAS is also an environmental justice issue. Many known and likely sources of PFAS contamination are located near low-income communities and communities of color. These include military bases, airports, industrial facilities, and waste management and disposal sites.

Congress has done significant work to regulate PFAS in recent years. However, the Federal government must do more to address this pervasive problem. And we need a whole-of government approach. Federal civilian science agencies play a critical role in researching and better understanding these chemicals. In addition to the DOD, agencies under the jurisdiction of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee such as the EPA, NSF, NIST and others, play important roles in addressing PFAS. I'm encouraged by the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment toward protecting the public from these harmful chemicals.

Given the pervasive nature of PFAS, R&D efforts and solutions must include coordination across

different sectors and groups. We need robust participation from Federal, state, local, and Tribal agencies, research institutions, academia, non-profits, industry, and manufacturers.

As we work to regulate, remediate, and mitigate PFAS, it is critical that these decisions are informed by science. Risk management decisions must be based on the best science to ensure they are effective and safeguard public health. There is much more to be understood about PFAS. Many outstanding questions remain about their sources, exposure, fate and transport, human and environmental effects, and treatment technologies. I look forward to hearing from our expert panel of witnesses today who will provide a broad set of perspectives on this issue.

I'm confident in the progress we can make with a science-based, whole-of-government approach. I look forward to working with our Federal agencies and their partners. We must come together with every tool we have to achieve a safer future for all Americans.

Thank you, and I yield back.