



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Haley Stevens (D-MI)
of the Subcommittee on Research and Technology

Research & Technology Subcommittee Hearing:
“Reauthorization of the National Institute of Standards and Technology”

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Good morning and welcome to this hearing of the Subcommittee on Research and Technology to explore the major areas of research at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. We look forward to learning more about how Congress can help the agency in its mission to advance U.S. competitiveness. A special welcome to our distinguished witness, the Honorable Dr. Walter Copan, for joining us here today. I’m looking forward to hearing your testimony.

As many of you may know, I am a big fan of NIST. This small agency plays a key role in promoting U.S. innovation and competitiveness by advancing measurement science, standards, and technology.

Many of you may have heard of NIST’s essential work in important industries of the future, like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and the bioeconomy, or its notable work to improve cybersecurity across the nation.

However, the agency has played an essential role over the last century in dozens of activities that are less-attention grabbing but just as important. NIST’s reference materials, technical standards, measurement and calibration services, and technical guidance help validate the safety and function of most of the objects around us, in both our homes and businesses.

One of the many important functions of NIST is managing the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership or MEP program, which is a federal-state-industry partnership that works with local manufacturing communities to strengthen U.S. manufacturing.

The Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center, an MEP center in my district, has helped its small and medium manufacturing clients create and retain nearly 11,000 jobs. The Center is a national leader in helping manufacturers establish cybersecurity programs, which are critical for manufacturers to protect both their operations and the devices they produce.

Another valuable manufacturing program managed by NIST is the Manufacturing USA program that we were able to reauthorize in December. I am pleased that NIST is ready to support a new institute in FY 2021.

It is because of the great work that goes on at NIST that I am deeply disappointed by the President's destructive budget request, which proposes over a 30 percent cut to NIST's programs.

The budget would entirely eliminate the MEP program and cut off funding for the Manufacturing USA NIIMBL institute in Delaware.

This budget is demoralizing to the dedicated public servants at NIST. It is harmful to our security, our health, and our environment, as many of the proposed cuts target these essential mission areas. And it is crippling to U.S. competitiveness, as the Administration is putting on the line billions of dollars in economic growth for U.S. companies to "save" \$316 million in a spread sheet.

But today, I do not want to dwell on a proposal that is my hope this Congress will reject. Today, I would like this Committee to focus on improving NIST and getting the agency the tools that it needs to better do its job.

For example, NIST has aging buildings on its campuses in Maryland and Colorado and faces a substantial backlog in construction and maintenance. We should discuss how to fix these issues so the scientists and engineers that work at NIST have modern and safe laboratories and equipment to do their important work.

Furthermore, in April 2019, NIST released a green paper about how to enhance return on investment for federal science agencies by increasing technology transfer. I look forward to hearing about these and other recommendations to enhance NIST's work.

I want to again thank Dr. Copan for being here today to discuss NIST's role and in what areas Congress can help NIST build on its incredible work.