OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Field Hearing: *"Earthquake Mitigation: Reauthorizing the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program"*
May 31, 2018

I welcome today's hearing on reauthorization of the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program.

Congress last authorized the programs and activities carried out under NERHP in 2004. The Committee has only held two oversight hearings on this important program since the previous authorization expired in 2009. The Science Committee should be leading the efforts to review this 40-year-old program's past successes and challenges and to make determinations for how it will administered in the future. As I have said before, I am disappointed that this Committee neglects its responsibilities as an authorizing committee to examine and make funding recommendations for important science agency programs. I am glad we are exploring the state of earthquake hazards risk reduction efforts today, and I look forward to the witnesses' recommendations for improvements to NEHRP as this Committee, hopefully, moves forward with reauthorization of this critical program.

It has been more than 50 years since the devastating magnitude 9.2 Alaska earthquake and resulting tsunamis took 139 lives and caused $2.3 billion in damage, in today's dollars. And almost 25 years have passed since a fatal magnitude 6.7 earthquake struck the Northridge neighborhood of Los Angeles claiming 57 lives, many thousands of injuries, and $20 billion in damage. As a nation we cannot let time make us complacent in our earthquake preparedness. Congress has continued to fund NEHRP and the four agencies tasked with carrying out earthquake hazard risk mitigation at an average of about $125 million per year.

The National Science Foundation and the U.S. Geological Survey carry out fundamental research in the earth sciences. Both agencies have extensive networks of instrumentation that record seismic activity, providing information that advances our understanding of the occurrence and intensity of earthquakes. While the National Institute of Standards and Technology is the lead agency for NEHRP, NIST also carries out applied research that provides the scientific basis for earthquake resilient building codes and design guidelines. And FEMA helps develop and promote the implementation of these building codes and standards, seismic mitigation plans, and earthquake training and awareness for States and territories.

We may not be able to tell when or where the next earthquake will strike, but because of NEHRP we are better prepared to mitigate the risk than we were 40 years ago. However, we still have much more work to do when it comes to earthquake early warning and community resilience. I thank the witnesses for being here to offer their expertise on improvements to NEHRP as this Committee considers authorization.

Thank you and I yield back.