

## **OPENING STATEMENT**

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Research and Technology

*“The Future of Biotechnology: Solutions for Energy, Agriculture and Manufacturing”*  
December 8, 2015

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman for holding this hearing. And I want to thank you and the Ranking Member for putting together such a distinguished panel of witnesses who represent the national laboratories, large companies, start-up companies, and academia.

This morning, we are talking about emerging biotechnologies and their applications for the energy, agricultural, and manufacturing sectors. A number of these new technologies are based on engineering biology research that allows researchers to safely re-engineer existing biological systems and to learn from and mimic existing biological systems to perform novel tasks and develop novel materials and products.

These new technologies are exciting and have the potential to solve some of society’s greatest challenges, including providing food for a growing population, reducing our dependency on fossil fuels, and dramatically transforming manufacturing. Additionally, they have numerous applications for the biomedical sector, some of which we heard about at a hearing this past summer.

Given the promise of this research and its applications, I introduced the *Engineering Biology Research and Development Act of 2015*, with my Science Committee colleague, Mr. Sensenbrenner. The bill would establish a framework for greater coordination of federal investments in engineering biology and lead to a national strategy for these investments. The bill would also focus on expanding public-private partnerships and on education and training for the next generation of engineering biology researchers.

Additionally, the bill will ensure that we address any potential ethical, legal, environmental, and societal issues associated with engineering biology. It will also ensure that public engagement and outreach are an integral part of this research initiative.

The goal of this legislation is to ensure that the United States remains preeminent in this critical area of science and technology. As I anticipate hearing this morning from our witnesses, if we do not make the necessary investments, we will lose our leadership position in engineering

biology. We are already seeing other countries make significant progress. The EU and others are investing, working on coordinated strategies across their research enterprises, and developing action plans to execute those strategies.

Right now, we are still a leader in engineering biology, but we must continue our work to ensure that we do not cede this leadership position. This field has the potential to grow our economy, create jobs, and improve our quality of life. Even though we are in an increasingly interconnected world, it is important to do all we can to promote innovation and job creation here at home. I am hopeful that we can work together across the aisle to ensure that the United States remains a leader in engineering biology.

In closing, I want to thank the witnesses for being here today and I yield back the balance of my time.