

**Opening Statement**  
**Ranking Member Frederica Wilson**  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Technology  
*The Current and Future Applications of Biometric Technologies*

May 21, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing on biometrics and thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning.

Biometric technologies can offer a number of benefits. They can increase security here at home by identifying terrorists or they can provide those in the developing world with an “official identity” that will allow them to open a bank account, buy a home, or receive public services. But there are also a number of privacy concerns surrounding biometrics, especially in the context of facial recognition.

Facial recognition raises special concern because the nature of the technology allows it to be used without a person’s knowledge or consent. To be honest this offers an advantage from a security standpoint, but it also raises a number of concerns.

There is a fear that remote surveillance will happen on a much broader scale, not just in the airport, but that individuals will be “tracked” as they run their day to day errands.

This technology still has its limits. Facial recognition failed to identify the two Boston bombers even though both had Massachusetts driver’s licenses and one was in an FBI database. But surveillance cameras did help to ID the bombers. And the use of surveillance sensors, both on the street and on-line, is increasing dramatically. As biometrics technology improves how it is used will expand dramatically. We have already begun to see the increased use of this technology by corporations such as Google, Apple, Facebook, and others. In the future this technology will not just be used to verify who *you* are, but who you are with, your family and friends, where you shop and what you buy. These coming biometric applications present serious privacy concerns that have not been well addressed.

The simple fact is that for many of us our face and name are already publically available online and taking that information to re-identify us in our offline activities is not that big of a step. You may recall a 2011 study where researchers at Carnegie Mellon University were able to

deduce portions of a person’s social security number from just an online photo.

The use of facial recognition technology beyond public safety—and even how this technology is used in the context of public safety— need to be carefully considered. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the current and future uses of biometric technologies and how we can reap the benefits of biometrics while also ensuring our privacy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I yield back the balance of my time.