

OPENING STATEMENT  
**Representative Bill Foster (D-IL)**

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Energy  
*“The Future of Low Dose Radiation Research”*  
November 1, 2017

Thank you Chairman Weber for holding this hearing on a very interesting topic. And thank you to the witnesses for being here to provide us with your testimony and expertise. I’m Congressman Bill Foster. I’m a scientist and a businessman and I’m glad to be with you today to discuss this important topic.

The basis of our regulatory framework around radiation exposure is the linear no-threshold model, which, as I am sure we will hear more about today, says that the risk of cancer increases with every incremental increase in radiation exposure. This conservative approach to regulation is frankly not well justified by the current body of peer-reviewed scientific literature in the low dose regime. But investing in research in this field is not just about the development of regulations. Federal investments in radiobiology research have resulted in significant progress in our understanding of the health effects of exposure to low dose radiation, in particular how cells respond to radiation exposure on a molecular level.

During the past 17 years, the low dose radiation research program at the Department of Energy has been responsible for several notable shifts in how scientists examine the impacts of radiation exposure, including the impact radiation has not only on the cells directly deposited with energy, but also the cells surrounding them, the “bystander” cells. This work has informed our physicians and medical researchers as they try to design better treatments for cancer patients. Moreover, the implications of this research can be seen in the number and breadth of federal agencies that invest in this work.

In addition to the Department of Energy, there have been federal investments in low dose radiation research at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Institutes of Health, NASA, and the CDC. These agencies all see benefits from this work in their own areas of interest. Yet leadership at DOE in the past Administration – and I should note for the Majority, the current Administration as well – decided to no longer support this area of research.

I am happy to join my Majority colleagues in our unified critique of this position. And we are not alone in our concerns. GAO’s report on this topic was very clear. They recommend that DOE take the lead in the “development of a mechanism for interagency collaboration on research on low-dose radiation’s health effects.” The only thing that is missing from this hearing is a witness from the Department of Energy. We are reviewing a report from GAO that includes key recommendations for DOE. Yet, here we are without a representative from the Department to provide us with their input on these recommendations. It really is a missed opportunity. I am disappointed

ed that we cannot have a more complete conversation or make real progress in our oversight of the Department on this crucial area of research. I hope the Majority will consider this as we move forward with additional hearings on this topic or others that are directly under the purview of DOE. The Department’s lack of Senate-confirmed leadership does not give them immunity to Congressional oversight. With that said, I am looking forward to continued bipartisan dialogue on this topic and to the testimony we will hear today.

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