OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

"The Science of Dyslexia"

September 18, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing.

And I want to thank the two co-chairs of the Congressional Dyslexia Caucus, Representatives Brownley and Cassidy, for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

I have known a number of people who have dyslexia. Even though dyslexia is a lifelong condition, with proper diagnosis and instruction, individuals with dyslexia can succeed in school and go on to have successful careers. We have an example of someone with dyslexia who has a successful career here with us today. I look forward to hearing your story, Mr. Brooks.

As the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, we oversee agencies that fund research from the very basic to development and deployment across nearly the entire portfolio of federal R&D. We don't directly oversee the lead agency for dyslexia research, which is NIH. However, we do have the important responsibility for oversight of the National Science Foundation, which supports fundamental research across a number of scientific fields that provide a foundation for dyslexia research. The National Science Foundation, as a leader in educational research, also funds learning science directly and indirectly related to dyslexia.

A significant amount of the NSF research relevant to dyslexia is funded out of the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate and the Education and Human Resources Directorate. That is why I have fought efforts in this Committee to slash funding for these important NSF Directorates, which fund valuable research that turns out to have broader, and often unanticipated, applications to other high-priority research – as we are seeing here today. Additionally, research funded by the Biological Sciences Directorate also contributes to foundational knowledge about the neuroscience behind dyslexia.

The NSF's Science of Learning Centers Program supports interdisciplinary centers that advance learning research. I look forward to hearing from Dr. Guinevere Eden about the Gallaudet University Center of which she is a part; that center focuses on visual information learning research.

Additionally, I am interested in hearing from Dr. Peter Eden about the NSF-funded research that is being conducted at Landmark College. This research is investigating important questions, including how students with learning disabilities best learn STEM, and how online educational environments could be adapted for students with learning disabilities. This research has the potential to improve educational outcomes for students with learning disabilities, including dyslexia, and perhaps for all students.

This hearing demonstrates how important it is to fund our research agencies at appropriate levels. We have learned so much about dyslexia, but have much more to learn. Without funding research into this area, including the foundational research that underlies the more applied work, we will not discover the biological basis for dyslexia. We will not create the next generation of treatments for dyslexia. And we will not determine the educational environments and techniques that are best for individuals with dyslexia.

I want to thank the witnesses on both panels for being here today. I look forward to their testimony and the Q&A.

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