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

"Private Sector Programs that Engage Students in STEM"
January 9, 2014

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Opening Statement

Good morning and thank you Chairman Bucshon for holding this hearing. I want to start by congratulating the students who are here today and welcoming you to the Committee. I am truly impressed by your leadership and your accomplishments, and you should all be very proud.

Unfortunately, too many students across the country do not have opportunities to participate in inspiring STEM activities or to receive a high quality STEM education. Once again, our students were just in the middle of the pack in the latest international test of science and math proficiency. We can no longer depend on our top few percent to maintain a strong and vibrant economy with good, high-paying jobs in our own communities. Our competitive edge will be lost if we do not vastly improve STEM education in this country for all of our students.

We know that this is a complex challenge that no one entity can solve alone. There is no silver bullet. And, there is a role for all the key stakeholders, public and private. Today we hear from two entrepreneurs and two education leaders in STEM education. I congratulate them for their important work and thank them for taking the time to provide their insight to the Committee today.

But I also want to emphasize the important and unique role of the federal government in improving STEM education. Many Federal STEM programs, including those supported by the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education, are making a difference in universities, community colleges, and K-12 schools across the nation. There are also many valuable programs being funded through other federal science agencies, such as NASA, NOAA, and the Department of Energy. These agencies are filled with thousands of scientists and engineers who can make a difference in their own communities and for students across the country. As working STEM professionals, the real life work that they do using STEM is so inspiring to our children.

But the federal role is more than that. The National Science Foundation is the premier STEM education research organization in the country. For decades, NSF has been a leader in developing the most effective and inspiring STEM curricula and programs in and out of the classroom. When the private sector invests in STEM education, they are looking for proven programs with proven outcomes. NSF, more than any other organization, is responsible for building that

evidence base. I hope this Committee will continue to exercise its responsibility to conduct oversight of NSF's and other agencies' STEM education programs.

Today though, I look forward to hearing from the experts on the first panel about their programs and how they measure impact. I also look forward to hearing from the students about what initially sparked their interest in STEM, and what role their teachers, parents, and other mentors have played in helping them to reach their goals. Thank you all for being here today to share your experiences with us.