

OPENING STATEMENT

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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Nanotechnology: From Laboratories to Commercial Products

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This morning we are discussing nanotechnology. As a long-time Member of this Committee, I am proud that the Committee recognized the need for an increased level of investment and better interagency coordination in this area almost 15 years ago.

That recognition led to the creation of the National Nanotechnology Initiative, or the NNI as it is called, which has invested nearly \$20 billion in nanotechnology research and development since 2001.

The investment in the NNI is one of the reasons that the United States is the global leader in nanotechnology research and development. Unfortunately, like too many other research areas, our leadership position is now being challenged.

In a 2014 report on Nanomanufacturing, which I am sure Dr. Persons will discuss this morning, the GAO reported that the United States is facing challenges to maintaining its leadership position in nanotechnology and nanomanufacturing. Several of our global competitors like the European Union and Japan are making significant and sustained investments in nanotechnology while we are busy debating how much to cut our research agencies.

If we are going to remain competitive, then the U.S. needs to make strong and sustained investments in nanotechnology; enact federal policies that help technology and manufacturing development; and play a central role in international standards development.

While we need to strengthen our leadership position in nanotechnology, we should also recognize that there are opportunities to work with our global partners. One area for collaboration is in the area of environmental, health and safety research or EHS research.

Unlike with nanomanufacturing research, there is no obvious competitive advantage in EHS research. Instead, all global nanotechnology partners benefit from a greater understanding of potential environmental, health, and safety aspects of nanotechnology.

As a former nurse, I recognize the need to understand and mitigate the potential risks to new technologies including nanotechnology. Without a strong EHS research program on nanotechnology, we will be left with uncertainties surrounding potential risks for people and environments that are exposed to nanomaterials and nano-enabled products. In addition to concerns about public health and safety, I am worried that these uncertainties could also lead to unsubstantiated negative public perceptions about nanotechnology, which could have serious consequences for its acceptance and use.

The NNI has always included activities for increasing understanding of the environmental and safety aspects of nanotechnology. But I believe that EHS research did not receive sufficient attention or funding for many years.

I applaud the current Administration's increased emphasis on EHS, but I remain concerned about our slow progress in this area of research. We need a strong nano-EHS research program to protect the public and to ensure that any nanotechnology regulations will be grounded in science not perception. I hope to hear from our witnesses today about their thoughts on this issue.

In closing, I am hopeful that we can work together to ensure that the United States remains the leader in nanotechnology and nanomanufacturing while working with our global partners.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I yield back the balance of my time.