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**Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Research and Technology**  
**House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology**

*Scientific Research at the Smithsonian – More than a Museum*

**January 14, 2014**

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing, and thank you to the distinguished witnesses who are testifying.

Many of us remember school field trips and family outings to local museums, zoos, and aquaria, and you only have to visit the National Mall on any given weekend to see droves of young kids and families in line to see a range of Smithsonian exhibits; from the full skeleton of a stegosaurus at the Museum of Natural History, to the command module of the Apollo 11 Moon landing at the Air and Space Museum, and – a little further northwest – Bao Bao, the giant panda cub at the National Zoo. For many young people, the Smithsonian and the thousands of museums and other science centers around the country provide some of the earliest exposures they have to science. We heard a few years ago from the Chicago Zoological Society's Brookfield Zoo about their informal education programs and the important role they play in my own community. I am a co-chair of the Congressional Zoo and Aquarium Caucus and have long been an advocate of the important role of museums, science centers, zoos, and aquaria in informal science education.

This Committee held a hearing last June to hear more about the Administration's proposal for the Smithsonian to take on new leadership in federal efforts on informal STEM education. While the Smithsonian has an impressive track record in providing informal education, it doesn't do everything that other science agencies now do. For example, unlike NSF, the Smithsonian does not make grants to external organizations, including science centers and museums across the country. I am interested in hearing how the Smithsonian, in its proposed new role, would strengthen the partnerships it has with its 184 affiliate museums and how these local organizations and the communities they serve will continue to benefit from their long-standing partnership with the federal government.

In addition to the opportunities it provides as a collection of museums and centers of science education, the Smithsonian is also a leading research institution. The scientists at the Smithsonian's research centers conduct research on many of today's most interesting and important scientific topics, from species preservation to climate change.

Smithsonian collections also allow great science to take place and allow its millions of visitors a first-hand glimpse of our natural history. However, if these collections are not preserved, all of this work could be lost. This Committee included a provision in the *2010 America COMPETES Reauthorization* requiring OSTP to develop consistent policies for the management and disposal of Federal scientific collections and ensure development of an online clearinghouse for information on Federal scientific collections. The Smithsonian is a natural leader among federal agencies in this effort, along with the U.S. Department of Agriculture which has significant

collections of its own. I am interested in hearing from the panel what means are being taken to preserve these artifacts and digitize them so that they can be studied and viewed for generations to come.

Finally, the way the Smithsonian is funded is somewhat unique since it receives around \$800 million annually in federal appropriations in addition to its many sources of private funds. But as everyone knows, we've been in a reduced budget environment which the Smithsonian has not escaped. The American people also have slimmer checkbooks, and as such, may not be donating in the amounts that they have in the past. I would be very interested in hearing how the Smithsonian is prioritizing their research and what challenges they have faced during the last few years of budget cutting.

Again, I want to thank Chairman Bucshon for calling this hearing, and the witnesses as well for being here. I look forward to your testimony and a productive discussion.

And with that I yield back.