

Opening Statement

Representative Elizabeth Esty (D-CT)

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

*“An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Institute of Standards and Technology
(NIST) for Fiscal Year 2017”*

March 16, 2016

Thank you, Chairwoman Comstock. And thank you for holding today’s hearing to examine the fiscal year 2017 budget request for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Dr. Willie May, thank you for testifying this morning and for your leadership at NIST.

For more than 100 years, NIST has supported the competitiveness of American companies. NIST’s broad and deep technical expertise has advanced measurement science, standards, and technological innovation— creating a strong U.S. economy and improving our quality of life.

I am pleased that the President’s budget for NIST recognizes its importance, enabling the agency to play a prominent role in revitalizing American manufacturing and expanding technology transfer activities.

The Administration’s budget proposes increases for two important manufacturing programs: the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program and the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI).

MEP Centers help manufacturers increase their profitability, streamline their processes, and adopt cutting-edge manufacturing technologies. The Connecticut State Technology Extension Program or CONNSTEP has helped numerous Connecticut manufacturing companies. In my district, CONNSTEP helped Hologic, Inc, a leading developer and manufacturer of medical imaging systems by working with one of their main manufacturing facilities. This facility, located in Danbury, employs more than 300 people and develops the digital imaging technology for 3-D mammography. CONNSTEP helped the company optimize their shop floor layout in order to accommodate a new line of 3-D mammography equipment, and develop new training.

After working with CONNSTEP, the manufacturing facility saw: unit production increase by 11 percent, lead time reduced by 50 percent, \$280,000 in cost savings, an increase in sales of \$80 million, and a 100 percent on-time shipment rate. Those are pretty impressive results and represent only one example of what the MEP program has accomplished.

The National Network for Manufacturing Innovation is a partnership among federal agencies, the private sector, and colleges and universities to create a national research and workforce training infrastructure for advanced manufacturing. At a time when American manufacturers face workforce challenges, such as the growing skills-gap, NNMI gives us a reason to be optimistic. I am pleased Congress funded NIST this year to establish the NNMI coordinating office. I was also happy to see that last month NIST announced an open-topic competition for the formation of two new institutes. As the only agency that isn't limited to a single mission, NIST can invite a broad range of proposals to help grow America's manufacturing future.

Finally, I'm pleased that the Administration's budget request increases funding for technology transfer activities. Federally funded research has changed our society and our economy, and has led to significant job creation. It is difficult to imagine (or remember!) a world without the internet, GPS, and numerous health saving treatments that all originated from federally funded research. In this Subcommittee, we often discuss the value of transferring federally funded research to the commercial marketplace. I was pleased to see that this budget proposes developing and expanding platforms for sharing information and knowledge.

These programs represent only a small fraction of the important work done at NIST. NIST is a small federal agency with the grand purpose of promoting U.S. innovation and industrial competitiveness. At a time in which our leadership in those areas is being challenged, NIST is more important than ever.

Ms. Chairwoman, thank you again for holding this hearing and I look forward to working with you and our colleagues to ensure that NIST has the resources it needs to fulfill its role in promoting innovation, increasing our competitiveness, and enhancing our national security.

I yield back the balance of my time.