OPENING STATEMENT

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of the Research and Technology Subcommittee

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Research & Technology
"An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Science Foundation for Fiscal Year 2017"
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Thank you Madam Chairwoman and welcome to our distinguished panel. I am pleased we are having this hearing to review the Fiscal Year 2017 budget proposal for the National Science Foundation.

The National Science Foundation is central to our nation's leadership in science and technology. NSF supports fundamental research -- across all fields of science and engineering -- that serves as the foundation on which our knowledge of our own world and the worlds beyond is expanded, our innovation economy is built, and our quality of life is improved. Over time, NSF has become the primary source of support for basic research across many fields, including the biological sciences, the social and behavioral sciences, and computer science.

The fiscal year 2017 budget request for NSF includes new mandatory budget authority. I like to think of myself as an optimist, but it is hard to imagine a scenario in which there is agreement any time soon on new mandatory funding. I wish, therefore, that the Administration had found additional support in the discretionary budget for the Foundation. I hope that my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee, in making their own very difficult trade-offs, will once again find a way to provide an increase for NSF.

Having said that, I'd like to highlight a few programs and initiatives in the budget that stand out for me. I see that NSF is not proposing any major new cross-agency research initiatives in FY 2017. However, the ongoing initiatives in Risk and Resilience; Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Energy, and Water Systems, or INFEWS; Understanding the Brain; Secure and Trustworthy Cyberspace; and many others remain essential investments, and I commend NSF for continuing to break down disciplinary barriers to address grand challenges for science and technology, and

for our nation.

In particular, I am glad to see the investments being made in the Innovation Corps program and in the Smart and Connected Communities Initiative. As the leading proponent of the I-Corps program from when NSF first created it, it's great to see its success. With minimal NSF educational funding, many start-ups coming out of I-corps trained teams have already received venture capital funding; and I look forward to more innovation and jobs coming from graduates of the program. In addition, the White House announced at the August Demo Day the partnerships that the NSF I-Corps program created with several new agency partners including DHS and the Defense Department. This demonstrates that NSF's I-Corps program also works within the government. I hope this will help other agencies see what NSF has long known, that the I-Corps model dramatically helps in translating research into new technology and new jobs.

Similarly with Smart and Connected Communities, we are seeing more and more the impact that connected devices have on our lives as well as the promise they hold for the future. The early examples that we have seen in transportation with connected and autonomous vehicles are just a small piece of what could be possible when we adopt a “Smart Cities” approach to integrating technology into traditionally disconnected devices. Cross-cutting research is needed to drive these changes, and I’m glad that NSF is taking a leadership role here.

With respect to the Education and Human Resources Directorate, I am interested in the systems approach that Dr. Córdova is taking to broaden participation in STEM in the INCLUDES initiative, so I look forward to discussion and progress reports on that effort. I am especially pleased to see the increase for the Cybersecurity Scholarship for Service program. The shortage of a skilled cybersecurity workforce in both government and the private sector is well documented, and has significant consequences for our national and economic security. However, I do have concerns about the proposed discretionary budget cuts to the Informal STEM Learning research program and the STEM-C Partnerships program, so I look forward to an explanation of the status of those programs.

Finally, I anticipate that there will be some discussion today about prioritizing some fields of

science over others. So let me conclude by quoting from our colleague Mr. Culberson, Chairman of the Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee of Appropriations. Following his own hearing last week with Dr. Córdova, in which he stated clearly that he does not want to appropriate by directorate at NSF, he said, “I think that we should let NSF pick the most promising areas and give the agency the flexibility to pursue them.” I strongly agree with Mr. Culberson on those points.

Thank you again to Dr. Córdova and Dr. Arvizu for being here. I look forward to your testimony. I yield back.