

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
*“Improving the Small Business Innovation Research and
Small Business Technology Transfer Programs”*
May 4, 2017

I would like to thank the Chairs and Ranking Members for holding today’s hearing to examine the status of the SBIR and STTR programs and to consider further improvements to the programs. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Science Committee and on the Small Business Committee to ensure that any legislation that might move forward will maximize the benefits of federally funded small business R&D.

The spirit of American innovation is undiminished, and the Federal R&D enterprise supports innovation by funding the best and brightest at our great research institutions and by creating opportunities to leverage private sector investment. The SBIR program plays an important role in supporting the small business community’s ability to contribute to the federal science agency missions.

That said, we should continue to explore smart ways to further leverage small business R&D to help meet federal research and mission needs. Changes to the SBIR and STTR programs made in the 2011 reauthorization were intended to make it easier for small businesses to navigate the program and to make the program more efficient. This hearing will examine how agencies have implemented the new requirements and flexibilities introduced in the last law and whether the programs are achieving their goals. In addition, one particular topic that I hope the witnesses can address this morning is the status of efforts to increase participation by women and minorities. For decades I have been advocating for policies to spur increased participation in the STEM fields by these groups, and I continue to be frustrated that we haven’t seen more growth. We need to do better in both our education system and in the private sector.

Finally, with regard to funding, the SBIR program has grown 30 percent since the 2011 reauthorization, while the overall federal R&D budget has remained essentially flat. Today, federal agencies set aside \$2.2 billion each year from the federal research and development budget to fund the SBIR and STTR programs. Stability and continuity in the SBIR and STTR programs are important goals, which is why I supported the agreement in last December’s National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to extend the program until FY 2022 at the current year’s levels. I believe it is appropriate that we leave that agreement standing even as we consider potential policy changes and updates. The Science Committee’s duty is to help ensure

that the R&D enterprise as a whole is healthy and sustainable, and I think that a good way to support continued growth of SBIR is by continuing to grow our overall investment in research and development.

In closing, I want to express my appreciation to our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to their comments and recommendations.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.