## Opening Statement for Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations "Examining Emerging Threats to Electric Energy Infrastructure" July 18, 2023

Thank you, Chair Griffith.

## IMPORTANCE OF SECURING OUR ELECTRICITY SECTOR

Protecting Americans' access to affordable, reliable energy is a top priority on the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Energy is foundational to everything.

Our way of life... a strong economy... and our national security.

For a more prosperous and secure future, we must safeguard our electrical grid from external threats like cyberattacks, physical attacks, and other disturbances.

Our electric grid is a crucial component of daily life, transporting and delivering energy to where it is needed.

It powers our homes, businesses, and other critical infrastructure such as hospitals, communications networks, and water systems.

Threats to the grid are threats to people's lives, health, safety, and their economic prosperity.

I know that was underscored to all our members who participated in our grid security field hearing in Moore County, North Carolina a few weeks ago.

## INTENSIFYING THREATS

Physical attacks on the U.S. power grid reportedly rose by 71 percent last year, as compared to the previous year.

Cyber risks to energy systems are increasing, and the Director of National Intelligence has confirmed that both Russia and the Chinese Communist Party are capable of launching cyberattacks that could disrupt critical energy services.

Just this month, we received yet another jarring reminder that enemies are both willing and able to infiltrate our systems and access our most sensitive information.

Reports emerged earlier this week that hackers in China breached email accounts at two dozen organizations, including the U.S. Departments of State and Commerce.

Attacks like this embolden China... imagine what is possible if the CCP hacks our grid.

They could shut down power to key national security facilities, like military bases...

...they could prevent power from getting to hospitals... cause widespread blackouts....

...and prevent critical energy resources from getting to the people who need them most.

It's vital that we secure our critical energy infrastructure from these threats, especially as those systems become more and more complex. Increased interconnectivity of our electric systems creates more vulnerabilities and opportunities for adversaries to infiltrate our critical infrastructure and inflict widespread damage.

These dangerous threats to our grid are why this committee reported out H.R. 1160, Rep. Walberg and Rep. Schrier's Critical Electric Infrastructure and Cybersecurity Incident Reporting Act back in February.

While securing such a vast, complicated network of electric infrastructure is a daunting task, it is a necessary one.

Lives depend on it.

Bad actors, both at home and abroad, have been refining their capabilities to compromise and damage and identify vulnerabilities in our electric systems.

It is time to have a real conversation about how we can harden our energy grid and enhance its resiliency to better protect it from all kinds of attacks, as well as equipment shortages and other potential risks.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS**

The goal of today's oversight hearing is to hear from experts on how we can work together to bolster the security of electric infrastructure and be prepared for increasingly sophisticated threats. America is home to exceptional innovators, electric infrastructure operators with valuable on-the-ground expertise, and other experts who have dedicated their careers to infrastructure security.

Open and frequent communication between our government, utilities, and other stakeholders will help us better prepare for and respond to rapidly evolving threats in an increasingly challenging security environment.

I appreciate our witnesses being here today to share their expertise and informing Congress's efforts to protect our constituents and the infrastructure they depend on.

I look forward to today's discussion.