

Opening Statement of the Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Subcommittee Hearing
“The Disrupter Series: Advanced Robotics”
September 14, 2016

Good morning and welcome to our hearing examining advanced robotics—technology that has made its way into the U.S. economy in a variety of sectors. Advanced robotics’ are integrated into our economy with increasingly complex applications, from manufacturing floors to surgical suites.

This is the latest installment of our subcommittees’ Disrupter Series covering a variety of innovative technologies that are redefining our lives and improving our economic condition.

It is 2016, and we are not yet living in a Jetsons’ world where Rosie the Robot greets you when you get home. However, we are living in a world where you can ask Siri, Alexa, or Cortana any question and get a real-time, accurate, perhaps whimsical, response.

Smart prosthetics are changing the lives of amputees and the elderly. Even some technologies that we have explored in previous Disrupter Series hearings leverage advanced robotic technology including the Internet of Things and drones.

I look forward to hearing from our panel of witnesses about the real world advanced robotics applications that students, academics, and industry professionals are working toward. Each of the witnesses here today can give us a different view of the emerging trends and challenges presented by advanced robotics technology.

The future workforce trends are particularly interesting. If it is true that more jobs will include some automation component in the coming decades, understanding how are students and professionals of all ages able to acquire the skills necessary to adapt to this changing landscape is important.

As with any new technology, it is critical to examine the benefits of the technology and weigh important consumer protection questions. Throughout our history, Americans have adopted and adjusted to economic shifts presented by new technology.

In our examination of these issues, it will be important to understand how consumers and businesses using these technologies will be protected while preserving the flexibility and ingenuity of innovators that are driving this market forward.

I thank the witnesses for taking the time to inform us about the applications and future potential of advanced robotics. I look forward to a thoughtful and engaging discussion.