Opening Statement of Representative Gianforte
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Hearing on "Inclusion in Tech: How Diversity Benefits All Americans"
March 6, 2019

As Prepared for Delivery

Getting more Americans working in tech increases opportunities and is good for all communities, not just Silicon Valley.

In Montana we continually face a workforce availability challenge across most businesses. Unfortunately, the work force challenges are even more evident in our tech sector. In the software business that I built in Montana, we were always competing to get the best and brightest. Rather than go far and abroad, we looked to develop our own right here in Montana.

Recently, I had the pleasure of spending the day with fourth graders at Bozeman's Emily Dickinson School during their Hour of Code event. Allowing the kids time to engage with coding early will increase awareness and draw new faces into the field. Using prewritten code, students were able to blow up their screens and make farm animals talk.

Another successful program for the state has been Code Montana. This class brings high school students into the computer lab. Students experiment with JavaScript, Node, and other programs to create their own apps. Believe it or not, over 90% of Montana parents want their kids to study computer science, unfortunately only 40% of our public high schools have a class available.

Our company understood that we needed to grow our workforce organically, and we recognized the challenges facing our local schools. We started working with the local university, Montana State, to develop a cutting-edge computer science program. Other entrepreneurs developed classes to engage and train the next generation of their work force. And through organizations like the Montana High Tech Business Alliance, we created a space to share ideas and address the challenges facing tech in Montana. We are making progress, but there is still a lot more to do.

Thank you and I yield back.