



COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**  
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

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**Full Committee Hearing Statement**  
**“Combating Sexual Harassment in Science”**  
June 12, 2019

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Thank you Chairwoman Johnson for holding today’s hearing. And thank you to our distinguished panel of witnesses for being here.

This hearing continues our Committee’s important, bipartisan work to combat a culture of sexual harassment in science.

Sexual harassment and gender discrimination are unacceptable in any situation. Period. It is wrong, it is illegal, and it is imperative that we end it.

Sadly, combating sexual harassment and discrimination of women is an ongoing challenge in workplaces and classrooms everywhere. But the science community faces some unique challenges when it comes to these issues—both in terms of how we address harassment and in terms of the broader consequences of this problem.

Individuals affected by sexual harassment and discrimination can suffer long-term harm to their education and careers, as well as to their mental and physical well-being. While we can’t lose sight of the individual cost, we must also think about the cost to our society and the economy as a whole.

Engaging more women in STEM studies and careers is essential to American competitiveness. Women make up half of the workforce, but account for less than 25 percent of America’s STEM workforce. We cannot afford to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy with one hand tied behind our back.

I was proud to join Chairwoman Johnson on the very first day of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress in sponsoring H.R. 36, the Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act. This bill has a foundation of more than a year of investigation, analysis, and recommendations to the Science Committee.

That work began last year, when the Science Committee held the first Congressional hearing on this subject. We heard disturbing testimony about the pervasiveness of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the sciences.

Only 23 percent of women who earn STEM degrees stay in STEM careers. When that panel of experts was asked what was driving women out of STEM, every witness said the number one factor was the culture in science.

Since that hearing, a lot of work has been done to examine this problematic culture, determine the extent of the problem and to start identifying solutions.

Last year the Committee investigated how universities and federal science agencies handle complaints and investigations of sexual harassment. We found inconsistency in how different agencies deal with complaints.

The Committee also found unclear policies and procedures that leave victims unsure of where to turn.

And the Committee discovered many institutions are more interested in checking the boxes of compliance, rather than doing the right thing.

Last year, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine also issued a consensus report: *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*.

The report not only found a high prevalence of sexual harassment in science but outlined a number of contributing factors. These factors include a perceived tolerance for inappropriate behavior, the male-dominated environment in many science departments, power structures that concentrate power in a single person who has an outsized impact on a subordinate's future success, a culture of symbolic compliance with legal requirements, and uninformed leadership.

The report made a number of policy recommendations, that we have included in our legislation.

Finally, the Committee commissioned a study from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to analyze how federal science agencies are ensuring compliance with sexual harassment and discrimination laws and managing reports of sexual harassment among grant recipients. We will hear the preliminary results of that study today, and I hope that the final report will make recommendations that drive changes within federal agencies.

I commend the National Science Foundation for already making changes. Under the leadership of Dr. France Cordova, NSF has set new policies to address sexual harassment and ensure the safety of all grant personnel supported by taxpayer funding. Our legislation proposes that these types of policies should be adopted by all federal science agencies.

No taxpayer dollars should be awarded to a researcher who engages in harassment and inappropriate behavior toward a colleague or a student.

Today's hearing will raise some difficult questions, many without easy answers.

How do we address these issues, while also maintaining due process and guaranteeing the rights of the victim and the accused? How do we ensure that in mandating institutional reporting to federal science agencies, we don't unintentionally discourage women from reporting harassment in the first place?

I hope our witnesses and other stakeholders can help us navigate these questions and help us improve H.R. 36 as it moves through the process.

Again, thank you Chairwoman Johnson for holding this hearing and working in a bipartisan and collaborative way to move legislation forward. I yield back.

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