



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON **SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Full Committee Hearing:

“An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Institute of Standards and Technology for Fiscal Year 2024”

May 10, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Lucas, for holding today’s hearing. I would also like to welcome our distinguished witness, the Honorable Dr. Laurie Locascio.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology is a small agency in the Department of Commerce that plays a large role promoting U.S. innovation and competitiveness by advancing measurement science, standards, and technology. NIST does critical work across every sector of our economy. The agency supports small manufacturers and our domestic supply chains. NIST is critical to the creation of engineering standards and building codes that make our buildings safe. And NIST develops the cybersecurity guidance that Federal agencies and businesses alike use to protect Americans’ information.

Congress and industry alike are asking NIST to take on more such responsibilities even as the agency faces a crisis of failing infrastructure and unmet maintenance needs. A report by the National Academies from February of this year found that deficiencies in NIST’s facilities “constitute a major threat to its mission performance and thereby, to our nation’s economy, national security, and quality of life.” Leaking roofs and exploding pipes have ruined millions of dollars worth of equipment. Poor ventilation systems have made it impossible for NIST to conduct certain critical experiments. Routine requests for maintenance are often deferred for months or years.

This is a problem decades in the making and it will require sustained support from Congress to overcome. I am encouraged that the President’s budget request would double NIST’s construction funding. It is essential that Congress follows through with funding, and that NIST continues to provide timely updates to us on the state of its facilities.

NIST does so much important work across all sectors. Let me just say a few words about two particular technology areas. NIST is leading the way on standards and frameworks for safe and trustworthy AI systems. Earlier this year, in response to a requirement developed by this Committee as part of the National AI Initiative Act, the agency published a voluntary AI risk management framework to help organizations think through and mitigate the risks in their AI systems. This framework has been lauded by the greater technology community, even though NIST led it with limited resources and only a handful of staff.

Voluntary standards are critical to ensuring that both public and private sector organizations can test, evaluate, and take steps to mitigate the risks associated with AI. I look forward to a discussion about

progress in developing standards and testing capabilities for AI. At the same time, AI technology is moving so fast that I worry voluntary guardrails will be too little too late. I recognize that NIST is not a regulatory agency so there are limits to the discussion we can have in this context, but we can still look to NIST for their deep technical expertise in informing our debates about policy.

Finally, NIST is the also the agency responsible for much of the CHIPS for America program that Congress passed last year to revitalize American-made semiconductor manufacturing. I know Members will have many questions about CHIPS implementation and where things stand. I look forward to learning more today.

Dr. Locascio, I am very happy with President Biden's continued commitment to science and American manufacturing as reflected in the fiscal year 2024 budget request for NIST. I look forward to your testimony today to learn about how we can tackle some of these major challenges and ensure U.S. competitiveness in advanced industries.

Thank you and I yield back.