



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing:
The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on University Research

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

Thank you Chairwoman Stevens and Ranking Member Baird for holding this hearing, and thank you to our distinguished panel for joining us today. This nation is in crisis on many fronts. Due to an unprecedented lack of leadership, nearly 200,000 Americans have died from the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of American children are hungry, countless Americans have no safe place to live, and our very democracy is at risk.

In the midst of all of these crises, it may be hard to think about our future. And it may be even harder to convince our colleagues and the American people of the urgent need to help rescue our universities, and by doing so, help rescue our future. And yet, that is what we are here today to discuss, for even now, we cannot afford to ignore it.

Even as China looms large as a competitor, and many other nations have strong science and innovation capacity, U.S. universities continue to lead the world in cultivating the next generation of STEM talent and serving as an engine for our economy. I believe that our universities can do more to recruit and nurture all talent, no matter their gender, race, disability, or other background. And I am pleased that Ranking Member Lucas has joined me in pursuing many efforts to address diversity and inclusion in STEM education and research. While I will continue my own efforts to address these disparities, I remain confident that American universities have the essential ingredients to help carry our nation into a healthy, secure, and prosperous future. More than that, I believe we cannot have a healthy, secure, and prosperous future without our universities.

This nation is blessed with hundreds of excellent research universities that collectively serve the very diverse needs of our population and underpin our innovation economy. I am not suggesting that all or even most of our university-based research is going to collapse due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am, however, deeply concerned that many institutions may not survive, that years of important research will be lost, and that we will suffer irreparable harm to our talent pipeline. I am especially concerned about the fallout from this pandemic undercutting the gains we have made in diversifying our STEM pipeline, including the geographic diversity that will help communities across the nation revitalize their economies in the coming years. We cannot allow that long-term damage to happen—the stakes for our nation are too high.

For those reasons, I did not hesitate to join my bipartisan colleagues in the House in cosponsoring the *RISE Act*, despite its hefty price tag. I was also pleased to be joined by many colleagues on the Science, Space, and Technology Committee in introducing the *Supporting Early Career Researchers Act*, which is focused specifically on keeping the best and brightest in research careers that they have already worked so hard for. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will continue to join me in advocating for real funding for those two bills.

Thank you and I yield back.