



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

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## Opening Statement

**Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing:  
*Building Regional Innovation Economies*

June 9, 2021

I want to thank Chairwoman Stevens and Ranking Member Waltz for holding this hearing. And thank you to our esteemed panel of witnesses for joining us to share your expertise.

The U.S. innovation ecosystem is the envy of the world for its capacity to create new technologies, jobs, and wealth. A number of U.S. cities and regions have led the way in building vibrant technology hubs. In an increasingly technology-driven world, these hubs are where new high-skilled, high-paying jobs are being created. While they benefit the country as a whole, the prosperity created by technology hubs is not shared equally across the country. It is not even shared within the regions in which the hubs are situated. If unaddressed, the concentration of economic growth will hamper our science and technology leadership and continue to exacerbate other societal challenges.

There have been a number of proposals for building upon longstanding Federal investments in building geographically diverse innovation economies. President Biden has called on Congress to invest \$20 billion to fund at least 10 regional innovation hubs and to help increase access to the innovation economy for communities of color and rural communities. He has also called for significant investments in research, technology development, and manufacturing innovation through our nation's premier science agencies. These are bold and timely proposals. The Science, Space, and Technology Committee is leading the way in thoughtful and transparent discussion and vetting of these proposals, including through this hearing.

In making any new investments of the scale called for in the American Jobs Plan and elsewhere, we must focus on ensuring a more equitable distribution of the benefits of new innovation economies. In addition to prioritizing geographic diversity, we must take steps to avoid replicating the income inequality and housing issues troubling our existing technology hubs. This starts by bringing a more diverse set of experts and voices to the planning table. Every city and every region is unique. The Federal government should not dictate local plans for building regional innovation economies. However, the Federal government, as a partner and co-investor, can require that every plan have certain elements and include certain kinds of partners.

Addressing these challenges at the Federal level will also require a renewed commitment to collaboration between Federal agencies. While today's hearing is focused on the Economic

Development Agency, or EDA, it isn't the only agency with an important role to play. Moreover, the EDA cannot accomplish these goals on its own. Congress must be clear about the role of each agency in contributing to regional innovation. And we must leverage the strengths of each agency for maximum benefit.

I look forward to hearing our witnesses' insights on how we can address these challenges. And I look forward to continuing the bipartisan work of this committee to advance bold and smart science and technology policies for our future.