



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Randy Feenstra

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing – “Strengthening the U.S.
Microelectronics Workforce

February 15, 2022

Thank you, Chairwoman Stevens.

Before I begin discussing today’s hearing, I would first like to say how thrilled I am to be named the new Ranking Member of the Research and Technology Subcommittee. I am grateful to Ranking Member Lucas for asking me to serve in this role. As I take on this new responsibility, I look forward to continuing the tradition of my predecessors, Ranking Member Waltz and Ranking Member Baird, in working in a productive and bipartisan manner. Chairwoman Stevens, I hope we can continue to build on our friendship and work together to deliver on the important matters before this subcommittee, like the focus of today’s hearing.

Today we will be examining how our U.S. workforce can meet the current and future demands of domestic advanced manufacturing in the semiconductor sector. I appreciate each of our witnesses for taking the time to speak with us today and sharing their expertise.

I suspect every American has been impacted in some way by the global supply chain disruption for semiconductors or “chips.” Semiconductors have grown to become an essential part of our modern lives – in Iowa they’re in nearly everything from tractors and semi-trucks, to smartphones. With such an important industry, we are making a mistake in keeping so much of our manufacturing capacity offshore. The U.S. share of global semiconductor manufacturing decreased from 37 percent in 1990 to just 12 percent today.

The CHIPS for America Act is a bipartisan, bicameral effort to reestablish America’s leadership in semiconductor chip manufacturing. Funding the CHIPS Act should be a top priority for Congress. We can and should pass this funding cleanly. Instead, two weeks ago the Speaker used the CHIPS Act, along with 12 other bipartisan SST bills, to move the partisan COMPETES Act through the House. A partisan “super bill” is not the way to get this important legislation done.

Relying on offshore manufacturing has led to supply chain bottlenecks, a rising cost of materials, and a decrease of American influence worldwide. We must ensure that the United States is a leader in producing semiconductors to bolster our national security and decrease the influence of the Chinese Communist Party worldwide. China continues to make record-breaking investments in R&D and the semiconductor industry.

By funding the CHIPS Act, the United States can help to solidify international leadership in advanced manufacturing for years to come. The CHIPS Act will likely generate tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs in both high-skilled and trade-focused roles. This comes as manufacturing companies are already facing difficulty finding skilled workers. Meeting the growing demand for a skilled workforce will be a critical factor in successfully growing our semiconductor sector.

Today we will examine how the manufacturing industry, community colleges, and higher education institutes can work together to solve this problem. I am looking forward to hearing from our great witness panel about ideas they have to build up the STEM pipeline in this space, and how we should be thinking about leveraging existing partnerships. I am particularly interested in how we can capitalize on the expertise of our military veterans and encourage industry to tap into this talent pool.

The CHIPS Act is a great step towards American investment in the semiconductor industry, but it is only the first step. The Committee should continue to consider how we are connecting Americans with these good, high-wage STEM jobs across the country.

We are at a pivotal moment where many Americans are thinking about a career change, and this conversation about workforce opportunities could not be more timely.

Thank you, Madam Chair and yield back the balance of my time.