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

Ranking Member Haley Stevens (D-MI)

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing:

"Robots Made in America: Advancing U.S. Leadership in Manufacturing and Automation"

April 21, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Obernolte, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

For decades, Michigan's auto industry led the world in the engineering, manufacturing, and safe adoption of robotics. Fun fact: industrial robots were deployed in General Motors plants as early as 1961. Over the decades, the United Auto Workers have negotiated thoughtful robotics adoption policies that have protected workers, improved safety, and raised wages.

But the robotics manufacturing we once pioneered in the United States is now being accelerated abroad. Our industry faces a unique threat.

Just a few years ago, Chinese robotics barely registered on the global stage. Today, according to the International Federation of Robotics, China is the global leader in the manufacturing, adoption, and export of industrial robotics.

China now also, through a concerted effort, controls much of the world's robotics supply chain. As a result of decades of Chinese investment, many U.S. manufacturers—and even our best-in-class roboticists in academia—are now dependent on China to research, develop, and deploy robotics and other supply-chain-supporting technologies.

As Michigan's manufacturing geek who's visited nearly 200 small- and mid-size manufacturers, I know we need to fix this. But, we face a few challenges:

We no longer have the capacity we once did to manufacture these robots at scale. America is home to the best and brightest AI scientists who are developing the brains—that is, the software—behind these robots, yet our country does not have a single advanced robotics foundry. And when robots are made in the U.S., they're often assembled with Chinese parts.

We also face an adoption challenge. 98% of U.S. manufacturers are small- and medium-sized companies that often lack the finances and expertise to adopt advanced manufacturing technologies, like robotics, into their workflows.

These challenges have been exacerbated by the choices of this Administration. Reckless tariffs, which I hear about on every manufacturing floor I visit, are raising costs on U.S. businesses and diverting their limited resources. Further, for two years in a row, the Administration has sought to end the Manufacturing Extension Partnership—a critical program that seeks to help small manufacturers address these problems.

If our nation continues on this path, cheap robotics and components from abroad will continue to flood our markets and displace American manufacturers and jobs. This is not an outcome we should accept.

We are at an inflection point. AI-powered robotics promise to revolutionize the manufacturing sector. Therefore, it is vital that workers have a seat at the table as these policies are negotiated, just like the UAW did when robots first came into our auto plants. Congress must also act and ensure that these technologies enhance rather than replace jobs.

I'm confident we can find common ground to keep America competitive, support American workers, and ensure that when the world buys the robots of tomorrow, they are designed, engineered, and built right here in America.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to take a moment to recognize our esteemed panel of witnesses, which includes Mr. Burnstein. Jeff is a fellow Michigander. And Dr. Helper, it’s wonderful to see you again from our time working together in the Obama Administration on manufacturing issues.

I yield back.