



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Environment Subcommittee Field Hearing:
Weathering the Storm: Improving Hurricane Resiliency through Research
Monday, July 22, 2019

Good afternoon and thank you, Chair Fletcher, for convening this important hearing on how we can improve hurricane resilience research. I am excited to hear how we can help coastal communities like Houston become more resilient to the increasingly frequent and intense storms we are already seeing.

As Chair Fletcher mentioned, the Texas coast is no stranger to hazardous weather. Hurricane damage is primarily caused by their high winds, heavy precipitation, and storm surge. These hurricane impacts can be devastating, especially to the estimated six million Texans that NOAA has estimated live along our over 3,000 miles of shoreline. Storm surge, and the waves caused by hurricanes, are the largest potential threats to life and property in coastal areas. Texan cities like Houston are on the forefront of dealing with these impacts, along with inland flooding caused by heavy precipitation, as we saw with Harvey.

Hurricane forecasts have improved tremendously in recent years. Many of the operational forecasting products developed by the National Hurricane center within NOAA's National Weather Service can be attributed to federally funded research. The Weather Service's partnerships with hurricane research programs, both within NOAA and extramurally, have played a huge role in improving the accuracy of hurricane models and forecasts.

I look forward to hearing from Dr. Uccellini, about the successes of the National Hurricane Center, and future opportunities for Congress to support initiatives within NOAA that can continue to improve hurricane forecasts.

Along with many of my fellow colleagues from Texas here today, I serve on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. It is becoming clear that the way our current infrastructure was designed decades ago, cannot withstand the coming impacts of a changing climate. Better understanding our future climate through improved weather forecasts and long-term climate predictions is critical to developing more resilient coastal infrastructure.

Just as hurricane forecasts have improved due in part to federal research investments in weather forecasting and modeling, there is opportunity for Congress to bolster research into coastal

resiliency solutions. Conversations like the one we are having today with federal agencies, academic researchers, and resilience-focused businesses, can provide recommendations that will inform decision-makers on how to move forward.

I am glad we have two Houstonians on this panel who are actively collaborating across disciplines and institutions in the Houston area, and beyond, to leverage a wide-range of expertise. I can guarantee that there is no one more dedicated to developing innovative solutions for building coastal resilience than those who have seen the devastation these storms can cause first-hand. I hope today's discussion brings us one step closer to finding these solutions.

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