OPENING STATEMENT

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of the Subcommittee on Energy

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Energy
"Advancing Nuclear Energy: Powering the Future"
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and thank you to this panel of expert witnesses for being here today. We are here to discuss the future of the advanced nuclear industry, an industry that may well be an essential player in realizing our goal of a carbon-free energy future.

Historically, the nuclear energy industry has faced a number of challenges including high costs, long construction times, and safety concerns. However, in recent years, new design concepts and technologies have emerged with a focus on addressing these and other common concerns with nuclear energy.

Advanced nuclear reactor designs have a number of benefits over the current generation of nuclear reactors. They incorporate passive safety features that prevent accidents due to human error. They have much lower waste, and use nuclear fuel more efficiently. And they can be manufactured in factories instead of on-site, reducing costs and shortening construction times. These new designs could disrupt the U.S. energy portfolio.

But for that to happen, we need to make the right investments. That's why I am pleased that Democratic and Republican members of Congress came together earlier this month to pass the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act. This bipartisan bill will help provide the tools and resources that our scientists and engineers in government, academia, and industry need for us to be the world leader in producing the next generation of nuclear power plants. This bill authorizes a new user facility that researchers and entrepreneurs will be able to use to test and develop new fuels and materials for novel nuclear reactor designs. It also supports investments in high performance computing to help accelerate R&D of advanced nuclear reactors, without the need for costly and premature investments in physical infrastructure. Lastly, this bill authorizes a cost-share program with industry to help offset the substantial price of licensing these first-of-a-kind reactors with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which is currently considered to be a major barrier to ultimately deploying these advanced technologies.

Beyond the implementation of this bill, I am looking forward to the testimony of all of our witnesses here today to discuss other issues and ideas that Congress should consider as we aim to accelerate the development of the advanced nuclear industry. I'm especially interested in hearing from Dr. Parsons, who brings a unique, big picture view of the challenges that the industry is currently facing as well as the potential for advanced nuclear energy to enable our clean energy future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the remainder of my time.