



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

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Emilia Sykes (D-OH)

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing:

*“The State of Scientific Publishing:
Assessing Trends, Emerging Issues, and Policy Considerations”*

April 15, 2026

Good morning, Chairman McCormick, and welcome to our witnesses here today. Today’s hearing scope is ambitious, to say the least. Published research connects the public to scientific discovery, and without publication, the impact of researchers’ findings would be lost.

Publication of research in a prestigious journal comes with an understood stamp of approval, and experts and non-experts alike respect this. Journals set the ethical and qualitative standards for the research that is fit to be published, and therefore they are the platform upon which science-based decision-making is possible – from the personal all the way up to public policy impacting the lives of all Americans. So, we have this sprawling hearing this morning – arguably, any issue that touches science writ large impacts the state of publishing.

Publishers are extremely aware of the crucial role they play, and frankly, many of them charge handsomely for it. This issue should be taken seriously. Instead, we have the President’s Budget issued two weeks ago, which places a government-wide prohibition on using federal research dollars for so-called “prohibitively high” publishing and subscription fees. This is an issue in need of a scalpel, and this decree is a sledgehammer. Cutting federal funds for publishing costs is only going to put further strain on our universities and researchers that are already under attack. This same budget request also cuts \$2.7 billion to higher education programs, and billions more in research funding. Research institutions foot the bill for these publication costs, meaning the true impact on scientific publishing is likely even more catastrophic.

Ultimately, pulling the rug out from under the publishing industry so carelessly will be a disaster for research integrity. Publishing fees contribute to high-quality peer review, to ensure that the research published in reputable journals is held to high scientific and ethical standards. It is disturbing, though not surprising, that this Administration is being so flippant about research integrity, when high-quality research often undermines its anti-science goals.

To be clear, I acknowledge that this is a nuanced issue, and I support the experimentation with different business models to expand public access. I am also skeptical of whether the fees journals charge are giving researchers and libraries alike a fair shake. Ohio has been a leader in negotiating with publishers to expand access to journals through OhioLINK, a state mandated

and funded effort that pools the purchasing power of universities to get Ohioans the best deal. This model saves Ohio more than \$1 billion, that's billion with a B, in journal costs every year. Through OhioLINK and similar transformative agreements, Kent State has saved more than \$1 million in article publishing fees, and University of Akron has saved \$600k since FY22. Especially as "AI slop" continues to pose a threat to research integrity across the board, publishers certainly play a critical role in protecting research integrity, but transparency around these fees is warranted.

I think it's important to zoom out on the many issues listed in this hearing's scope. The Administration throws around the words "gold-standard science" as a distraction as they cancel millions and millions of dollars' worth of research that has passed rigorous merit review processes. They eliminate scientific functions, such as the EPA's Office of Research and Development, and move a fraction of the scientists under the Office of the Administrator where they can be more tightly controlled by political operatives who want to silence research that is inconvenient for its deregulatory agenda. Words including "accessible," "disparity," and "underrepresented" are plugged into keyword searches to deny proposals for grant funding, ensuring that already-marginalized researchers and understudied populations remain on the sidelines.

So while this hearing, on paper, strives to address serious issues, I bristle against the implication that the solution to these enormous problems is primarily found in assessing the state of the publishing industry.

We would be far better served by a more focused conversation on the evolving business model of the publishing industry given the changes required to adapt to public access policies. Then, we could have a dozen oversight hearings on the other issues in this hearing's scope, about the myriad ways this Administration is systematically obliterating the high standards to which the American scientific enterprise has held itself for decades.

I look forward to hearing their expert testimony, and to treating this issue with the nuance and perspective it deserves.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.