

Rep. Fred Keller (PA-12) Testimony

House Appropriations Committee

FY 2021 Member Day Testimony

June 23, 2020

Chairman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger: I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

As this committee begins to craft the FY 2021 appropriations bill, I am here to request funding for some very important things going on in Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District that impact the safety and security of the entire country.

As we continue to re-emerge from this uncertain time, one of the lessons we have learned is the importance for the United States and our allies to not be reliant on China for important medical and defense products.

One of these is the domestic supply of Tungsten, which is used in many U.S. defense products such as penetrators, artillery projectiles and tank shells.

The U.S. Geological Survey determined that Tungsten is a critical mineral. Additionally, the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act prohibited the acquisition of certain Tungsten products from China, Russia, North Korea and Iran.

At latest count, China controls over 80 percent of Tungsten mining in the world and remains the world's leading producer of Tungsten by a large margin. China uses its supply dominance to manipulate the global market.

Given all that we have learned about China's intentions during COVID-19, and with China's growing military influence throughout the world, it is clear that we need to be incentivizing domestic production of this critical metal so that going forward, the United States and its allies no longer have to rely on foreign sources, especially China, for any of our Tungsten supply. It has been proven that this is possible - the DoD completed a report in April 2019 which concluded that domestic Tungsten capacity is sufficient to fully satisfy military requirements.

That is why I have requested report language and just above \$15 million for the Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment Program. This is an effective tool to support the domestic defense industrial base and can also be used to further strengthen our domestic Tungsten industry in order to meet defense needs.

On a similar note, I would like to affirm my support for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). However, given the nature of the agency's important and sensitive work with nuclear projects, NNSA should be mindful when choosing contractors who source material from these non-allied nations. The NNSA, and other non-DoD government agencies, should consider requiring contractors to use U.S.-made tungsten.

Earlier this year, I testified before the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development subcommittee about the importance of funding for the Federal Transit Administration's Bus Testing Facility program, which has been located at Penn State University since 1989.

The testing, which has been conducted at Penn State's world class research facilities, has saved government and industry stakeholders hundreds of millions of dollars and identified operational problems with buses before they become community issues.

Without enough funding provided in FY 2021, BRTC will not have the resources to test new model buses beyond 2021.

I would also like to reassert my support for the Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, or BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant program.

Communities in my district have seen the impact BUILD grants can have on economic development and transportation safety projects and continued funding remains critical.

I hope this Committee will consider supporting the President's Budget Request of \$1 billion for the BUILD grant program or greater for FY2021.

I again thank you for the opportunity to testify today about these important issues and can be contacted for additional questions on any of these requests.