

The Honorable Mark Takano

41st District, California

Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee

Office of Technology Assessment Funding

Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I'm here to express my support for restoring funding to the Office of Technology Assessment, often referred to by the acronym OTA.

The foundation for good policy is accurate and objective analysis, and for more than two decades the OTA set that foundation by providing relevant, unbiased technical and scientific assessments for Members of Congress and staff.

But in 1995, the Office of Technology Assessment was defunded, stripping Congress of a valuable resource.

Congress has an important role to play in making sure that the benefits of advances in science and technology are distributed equally throughout our society and that the potential harms are mitigated. In order to do this, we need to strengthen our capacity to understand emerging technology and its social and policy implications.

Congress needs access to unbiased technological expertise to weigh the pros and cons of policy questions surrounding cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, quantum computing and so many more matters.

In the ecosystem of legislative support organizations, OTA plays a unique role. No other entity has the capacity and expertise to provide in-depth and forward-looking analysis of complex, technical issues informed by an understanding of how Congress works.

Last year, in response to the growing demand for technical expertise in Congress, the Government Accountability Office received funding to establish a new Science, Technology Assessment, and Analytics (STAA) team. This expanded capacity at GAO is an important step but it is not sufficient.

A restored OTA would complement GAO, as well as CRS, by combining deep technical expertise and robust forward-looking reports with the ability to be responsive to immediate questions and needs of Members and staff. These needs will inevitably continue to arise as Congress responds to rapid changes in technology.

As we continue seeking new and innovative ways to modernize Congress, OTA would be an important means through which we can ensure Congress has the tools it needs to respond to the unique challenges of our time. This is an important strategic investment in our institution's capacity to create technology policy that protects our constituents while encouraging innovation.

I urge you to support this request to restore funding to the Office of Technology Assessment, and I yield the balance of my time.