

House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
Member Day
Prepared Remarks for Representative Mark Takano (CA-39)
April 17, 2024

Chairman Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. I would like to take this moment and implore the Subcommittee to provide robust funding for congressional Science & Technology (S&T) resources. Expertise in S&T is necessary to assist Members of Congress make well-informed and evidence-based public policy decisions grounded in research. Specifically, I am requesting \$6 million to restore the already authorized Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), and, in the absence of restoring OTA, asking for language to request a follow-up report to the 2019 National Academies of Public Administration (NAPA) review of congressional S&T resources.

For more than two decades, OTA provided relevant, unbiased technical and scientific assessments for Members of Congress and staff. The office was unfortunately defunded in 1995, stripping Congress of a valuable resource that understood both emerging technologies as well as the intricacies of the legislative process and the needs of policy makers. OTA remains authorized and is unique in that its mission enables in-depth analysis with extensive input from external experts providing forward-looking and comprehensive assessment of new technologies.

In its absence, the need for the OTA has only grown. Nearly thirty years after OTA was defunded, Congress is grappling with questions surrounding how to encourage innovation while minimizing the potential harms of new technologies. A restored OTA could help Congress develop thoughtful, targeted policy around emerging technologies, including but not limited to

artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and autonomous vehicles. As complex advances in science and technology continue to rapidly evolve, Congress should have access to OTA's thorough and nonpartisan analysis to help find the right path forward.

Funding the OTA is a wise investment for the future. In Fiscal Year 2020, the House Appropriations Legislative Branch Subcommittee included \$6 million in initial funding to re-establish the agency and passed out of committee by voice vote. Unfortunately, the funding was not included in the final appropriations package signed into law. I ask that you revive your efforts to restore funding for OTA to begin rebuilding the office with \$6 million in appropriated funding for Fiscal Year 2025. These funds will better prepare Congress to account for emerging technologies in the legislative process and allow us to make informed policy decisions.

If the Subcommittee chooses not to restore funding, I ask that you request a follow-up study to the 2019 NAPA report: "Science and Technology Policy Assessment: A Congressional Directed Review." This report examined the technology assessment services provided by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and identified remaining gaps in networking support, consultative support, short-to-medium term reports, and horizon scanning reports. The report recommended "enhancing existing entities and creating an advisory office" to solve these gaps.

Since the report's release, only the enhancement of existing entities has been enacted, with the House Committee on Appropriations increasing funding to both CRS and GAO for S&T assistance. Additionally, in 2019, GAO established the Science, Technology, Assessment, and Analytics (STAA) mission team which generates assessments, primers, and training for staff on emerging technologies. Since its establishment, STAA has quickly increased its workforce and taken on additional responsibilities to help Congress with its S&T needs. I commend the work

that both CRS and GAO have done to address some of the gaps left behind by OTA; however, more must be done to meet this moment of rapid technological development and solve the remaining gaps identified in the 2019 NAPA report.

I believe this follow-up report must include a reexamination of the gaps identified in the original report to account for the changes implemented by CRS and GAO in their S&T support. This report should also make recommendations on Congressional actions that can be taken to improve the coordination between CRS, GAO, and the National Academies to increase efficiency and avoid duplicative efforts. Lastly, I believe this follow-up report should also examine whether and how to authorize the STAA mission team to ensure the longevity of Congress's S&T capacity.

To effectively respond to the latest advancements in S&T, I believe it is imperative for the Committee to invest in Congressional S&T support through restoring OTA or requesting a follow-up report. Restoring funding to OTA will provide Congress with the expertise to make well-informed and evidence-based public policy decisions. Should the Committee not fund OTA, a follow-up report will inform Congress on the steps necessary to address remaining gaps in S&T resources and expertise and ensure the longevity of relevant and unbiased S&T expertise.

Thank you for your time and leadership. I look forward to working with you all to ensure that Congress has the resources necessary to respond to the latest advancements in science and technology.