



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Subcommittee on Research & Technology Hearing – *“The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on University Research”*

September 9th, 2020

Thank you, Chairwoman Stevens, for holding today’s hearing to examine the challenges our academic research enterprise has faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the pandemic reached our shores, many researchers immediately pivoted to apply their knowledge and resources to fight this virus. Universities have devoted engineering departments to 3D printing personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline workers. They have engineered inexpensive ventilators and self-sterilizing equipment for hospitals. And they have even repurposed veterinary labs to process COVID-19 tests.

Unfortunately, even while doing this exceptional work, universities have also had to slow down or entirely stop other research that is non-essential to fighting COVID-19. Social distancing, travel restrictions, and campus closures have forced many researchers to stop their work.

There are tremendous costs to this halt in research:

First, we lose the scientific knowledge and technological development that would be gained from this work.

Second, we face economic consequences. According to IRS data, American universities used research funds to pay more than 560,000 people on campuses across the country in fiscal year 2018-2019.

And third, we could slow our scientific progress for years to come because of the damage being done to our STEM pipeline.

We know it will take time and financial resources to get the research enterprise back up on its feet. But if we do not provide the resources now, we will be limiting our ability to

support new and innovative research, and forced to play catch up to our foreign competitors like China.

That's why I am a proud cosponsor of the Research Investment to Secure the Economy (RISE) Act. It will help ensure that our research sector recovers from the current challenges and continues to thrive even after the pandemic subsides. The RISE Act authorizes approximately \$26 billion in emergency relief that federal science agencies will award to research universities, independent institutions, and national laboratories to continue working on federally funded research projects. This funding will allow us to continue to support the critical research we need to keep progressing as a nation.

Along with the RISE Act, we have the Supporting Early Career Researchers Act – a bipartisan bill led by Chairwoman Johnson and Congressman Mike Garcia. This bill creates a fellowship program at the National Science Foundation for postdoctoral researchers who are unable to continue their research at universities due to COVID-19.

By allowing graduate students and post-docs to stay in research rather than leaving to find other employment, these bills will help us preserve our STEM workforce, so we don't lose out on years of discoveries.

As we fight to keep America safe, healthy, and economically stable during this pandemic, there is one certainty: our success depends on science.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about their experiences, the lessons they've learned, and the recommendations they have for how Congress can invest in American research and technology to overcome future pandemics and scientific challenges.