



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Energy Subcommittee Hearing:

Biological Research at the Department of Energy: Leveraging DOE's Unique Capabilities to Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Friday, September 11, 2020

Thank you Chairwoman Fletcher for holding this hearing today, and thank you to all of our witnesses for being here.

Today we meet to discuss the groundbreaking bioscience research supported by the Department of Energy's Biological and Environmental Research program, and how these capabilities are now being used to better understand the novel COVID-19 virus.

DOE stewards many unique facilities related to the biosciences. They range from the Department's world-class genomic sequencing tools that have been decades in the making, to large x-ray light sources that can be used to identify various characteristics of and treatments to this virus. Combining this experimental knowledge with the Department's state-of-the-art supercomputing capabilities provides our nation with a scientific testbed that is second to none.

This extensive biological research portfolio has been leveraged as a part of a broad Department-wide initiative called the National Virtual Biotechnology Laboratory that was created to help address the issues we face from the current global health crisis as well as those we can expect in the future.

Not only are the activities of the Biological and Environmental Research program so critical for better preparing us to respond to potential future pandemics, but also for our national energy security and for addressing the climate crisis. Among other applications, research carried out under this program will help us develop the low-emissions biofuels of the future, which will be very important as we work to decarbonize the transportation sector and other parts of our economy.

Today, however, our focus is on the program's contribution to the fight against COVID, and I look forward to our witnesses' testimony. Thank you again to our witnesses for being here, and with that I yield back the balance of my time.