

**Congressman Bill Foster (IL-11)**

*Members' Day Hearing: House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology*

March 11, 2025

Thank you Chair Babin and Ranking Member Lofgren for the opportunity to testify today.

Today, I'd particularly like to talk about some of the science and energy research infrastructure needs of the Department of Energy. I'd like to focus on the deferred maintenance, critical infrastructure, and modernization needs of the Department of Energy National Labs. These are the fundamental investments ensuring that the literal buildings of our labs are kept standing and up to date. Without this critical infrastructure, our National Labs cannot keep up the incredible work that they do to keep the United States at the vanguard of scientific discovery. I am planning to introduce legislation to support this effort. I expect it will be referred to this committee, and would love to collaborate with any Member of this Committee interested in supporting our National Labs.

I'd also like to take some time to urge this Committee to actively support our federal scientific workforce. During my previous time on this committee, as Chair of the House Science Committee Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, one of the first hearings I held was on the damage done to our nation's scientific enterprise by the first Trump Administration. The statistics were concerning: there were significant losses in key STEM positions at the DOE, the EPA, and NOAA—including a 20 percent reduction in the DOE Office of Nuclear Energy.

The departure of so much scientific talent and institutional knowledge from the federal government represents a permanent competitive disadvantage for the United States. It is our duty to ensure that, regardless of the political climate, science remains at the forefront of our nation's progress and innovation. One particularly useful tool is to also make sure that we support scientists

who come to the U.S. for their education and want to stay and contribute their skills to our economy. During my two decades at Fermi National Laboratory, some of the brightest and most accomplished scientists and engineers I had the privilege to work with came from foreign countries. These researchers are a fundamental part of our entire scientific workforce, including at our National Labs. Though it is outside the jurisdiction of this committee, I welcome your support on my Keep STEM Talent Act, which eases the path to a green card for professionals with advanced STEM degrees.

Finally, I'd like to urge you all to continue your focus on Artificial Intelligence. As a member of last Congress' Task Force on Artificial Intelligence, I was truly impressed by the bipartisan progress we were able to make on this important topic. This was thanks in no small part to the efforts of our Chair, Rep. Obernolte, and co-chair Rep. Lieu. It was also due to the support of the House Science Committee, and the depth of knowledge on the staff here, which allowed us to make actual progress on understanding what Congress can do on AI. This is an area that is in particular need of Congressional input and leadership.

Thank you again for your time today, and I yield back.