



July 27, 2021

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
U.S. House of Representatives
Chair
House Science, Space & Technology
Committee
2032 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Lucas
U.S. House of Representatives
Ranking Member
House Science, Space, & Technology
Committee
2032 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Haley Stevens
United States House of Representatives
Chair
House Science, Space & Technology
Committee – Subcommittee on Research
& Technology
2032 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Waltz
United States House of Representatives
Ranking Member
House Science, Space, & Technology
Committee – Subcommittee on Research
& Technology
2032 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Johnson and Stevens, and Ranking Members Lucas and Waltz:

On behalf of the Security Industry Association (SIA), I would like to express our strong support for H.R. 4609, *the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) for the Future Act of 2021*, bipartisan legislation which authorizes various NIST activities, programs, and critical research endeavors that projects the United States as the global leader in technological innovation.

SIA represents nearly 1,200 innovative companies that provide safety and security technology solutions vital to public safety and the protection of lives, property, information, and critical infrastructure. Many of our member rely heavily on NIST test data to measure improve the algorithmic performance of emerging technologies, including biometrics and artificial intelligence.

NIST's Scientific and Technical Research and Services (STRS) activities provide industry, academia, and other federal agencies with world-class research capabilities in measurement science that form the foundation of the global system of weights and measures and enable innovation. Importantly, NIST STRS supports America's global competitiveness by aiding businesses to overcome technical obstacles. H.R. 4609 authorizes and prioritizes significant funding increases to STRS activities, and such investments will enable technology enterprises to dedicate additional resources to research and development and further multistakeholder partnerships with NIST.

Led by NIST's Information Technology Laboratory Image Analysis Unit, biometrics testing, notably, the facial recognition vendor test (FRVT), provide critical resources for law enforcement, government, and commercial entities to assess the quality of their biometric technologies. However, as we've learned in past congressional

hearings, the unit lacks the full resources needed to expand its scope to cover important needs it has identified, including, but not limited to, better understanding bias and bias mitigation; testing cloud-based algorithms; coordinating with other federal agencies that deploy facial recognition in the field to evaluate facial recognition technologies' performance in operational conditions; and evaluating the accuracy of human recognition as compared to that of facial recognition technologies. In accordance with sections 206 and 207, codifying biometrics testing programs will afford NIST's Image Analysis Unit the resources and structure needed to carry out expanded testing and evaluation activities that technology developers and end-users can leverage to promote the responsible use of facial recognition technology and elevate America's leadership role in modeling ethical use of such technology.

Finally, security equipment manufacturers, particularly, small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), have depended on NIST's Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) to provide U.S. manufacturers with access to technology, resources, and industry experts – all of which have enabled growth and development for SMEs. H.R. 4609 delivers necessary funding increases and structural changes to NIST's MEP to allow underserved communities to access MEP grant opportunities. SIA supports this approach since it cultivates a diverse pipeline of talented individuals ready to leverage future workforce development programs under MEP's purview.

SIA encourages committee members to issue a favorable report of H.R. 4609 during today's markup. Thank you for your leadership and attention to this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Erickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Don" being more prominent than the last name "Erickson".

Don Erickson
CEO
Security Industry Association

CC: Members of the House Science, Space & Technology Committee