



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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Pallone Warns Trump Budget Cuts Threaten American Innovation at Advanced Materials Hearing

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection Subcommittee hearing “Disrupter Series: Advanced Materials and Production”:*

Mr. Chairman, today’s hearing gives us the opportunity to explore some ways in which science and scientific research is allowing us to improve materials already in use or create new materials that are more adaptable to the needs of consumers and industry.

Advanced materials can be found in almost every industry sector. In the aerospace field, a new material composed of a multilayer lamination of glass and plastic is being used in helicopters and planes to make stronger and more durable windshields. Advanced materials research is also happening with regard to a wide range of consumer products. As one example, researchers are working on creating batteries that are more stable and safer than the common lithium ion batteries used in so many consumer electronics. Just this week, in a tragic accident in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a toddler died as the result of an exploding hover-board. Safer batteries would prevent these kinds of tragedies from occurring.

Today, we are fortunate to have Professor Rabiei here to describe how advanced materials are used to create protective armor – armor that has been described as metal bubble wrap. This metal wrap can be used to protect individuals, as well as to protect multiple personnel in vehicles and other forms of transportation.

Some of these successes in advanced materials resulted, in part, from the federal government’s investment in basic scientific research. As with all new scientific breakthroughs, funding for research and development is paramount and the federal government is the largest financial supporter of basic research. The return on publicly-funded scientific research and development (R&D) is well established, and federal support of this kind of innovation is key to the success of America’s economy.

In 2011, President Obama established the Materials Genome Initiative that has invested more than \$500 million in federal funding to discover and deploy advanced materials.

President Obama also established the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI), a network of nine federally-supported advanced manufacturing research institutes throughout the country. These institutes have provided research centers to academia, industry, and government for testing as well as opportunities to collaborate with others in their fields or complimentary fields of expertise.

These institutes work on light-weighting vehicles so that they are more energy efficient but still just as strong and safe. They also promote 3D printing in manufacturing, develop the fabrics of tomorrow that will act as connected devices, and help commercialize advanced resin and fiber composites that have a longer room temperature shelf life.

America's leadership in advanced materials and other important R&D may be at risk based on the preliminary budget summaries we have seen from the Trump Administration. We should not walk away from the significant efforts made – or the public funds that have made those advancements possible. The U.S. should be the most attractive place to research, develop, commercialize, and produce advanced materials. These are the some of the jobs of the future, and we should do everything we can to continue to support this important R&D work so that these jobs stay here in the U.S., rather than go abroad.

I am pleased that the Subcommittee will have the opportunity today to learn more about advanced materials from those who know it best. Science, engineering, and technology are together creating good jobs for Americans. I hope to see that continue. Thank you.

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