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

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Statement by Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade
Hearing on "The Disrupter Series: 3D Printing"

Thank you, Chairman Burgess. 3D printers, and the products they produce, have the potential to transform and improve our lives. It's remarkable to think about what is already possible in this space, not to mention the possibilities for the future.

Today, 3D printers are driving innovation in American factories, schools, hospitals, and homes.

All around the country, health researchers are using 3D printers to develop new approaches to tissue transplant and regeneration. The level of customization permitted by 3D printing can allow prosthetics, hearing aids, and dental aligners to be made more comfortably, effectively, and affordably.

Now think about the potential for 3D printers to transform the way cutting-edge medical care is distributed. The latest and greatest discoveries would no longer be limited to those who have access to a select group of medical facilities. Instead, 3D printers could help to easily reproduce new treatments and therapies at any hospital throughout the country and the world.

3D printing technology also has the potential to help build a more dynamic and inclusive workforce. At Rutgers University, innovators created 3D-printed braille maps that make a local vocational training center easier to navigate for the visually impaired. Additionally, 3D printers allow people to create prototypes of new designs or inventions at a lower cost than traditional production techniques, thus helping underrepresented communities gain access to entrepreneurship.

The development of 3D printing technology is a great example of how effective public-private partnerships can be. This Administration, and members such as Representative Kennedy, have worked to strengthen federal support for twenty-first century manufacturing technology such as 3D printing. I look forward to hearing how the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI) is working with companies, such as those represented by our witnesses today, to promote American innovation and safeguard the future of domestic manufacturing.

As with all new technologies, the further adoption of 3D printing, especially at-home use, raises safety and regulatory questions. Many of us have seen the media coverage about 3D-printed guns. While the ability to make guns at home may not be new, the ability to make them easily and cheaply poses new safety risks. And increasing the number of guns made outside of the registration process could increase the number of guns in the hands of criminals.

In addition, questions have been raised about how to protect intellectual property as 3D printers proliferate. There have been concerns about some types of "ink" used in 3D printing containing BPA, a chemical that the Food and Drug Administration has banned from use in baby bottles and children's drinking cups.

3D printing offers enormous possibilities for innovation in manufacturing, increased opportunities for entrepreneurship, and convenience and customization that was not available before. It's exciting to think about the possibilities, and I am confident these innovations can be coupled with consumer protections so that they really can improve people's lives.

Thank you and I yield back.

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