

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Opening Statement  
of**

**Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection Ranking Member Jan Schakowsky**

***Oversight of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration***

**February 14, 2018**

The Internet of Things has tremendous potential to change manufacturing in the United States. So-called “smart manufacturing” can help businesses save resources, improve performance, and expand consumer choice.

For example, a sensor can remove the need for a human worker to physically check a machine. Assuming everything works correctly, that sensor makes the worker’s job easier and reduces the opportunity for human error.

As the Internet of Things evolves, more and more processes can be automated. And this raises some familiar issues for this subcommittee: privacy, cybersecurity, safety, and labor market impacts.

Advanced manufacturing requires a different set of skills than the production lines of previous generations. Workers must be trained for these jobs. And we need to be responsive to the needs of workers who may be displaced by changes in manufacturing.

We must also be mindful of accessibility. I think back to the autonomous vehicle legislation that the House passed last year. Self-driving cars may open up new opportunities to those with disabilities. But some of those vehicles need to be accessible for people in wheelchairs, for instance, so that we can fully realize the potential improvements in mobility.

The same goes for manufacturing workers. Depending on how the technology is designed and integrated, bringing the Internet of Things into manufacturing could either expand or limit job opportunities for workers with visual impairment or physical disabilities.

In addition, we must ensure that businesses can get the full benefits of smart manufacturing. Oftentimes, a prerequisite for businesses to integrate new technology is the broadband to support it.

Last year, Democrats on the Energy and Commerce Committee unveiled a comprehensive infrastructure package – the LIFT America Act – which included a \$40 billion investment in secure and reliable broadband. A serious infrastructure bill takes real dollars, and I hope we can work together to advance that type of job-creating legislation.

February 14, 2018

Page 2

I would also note that some of the advances we see in manufacturing stem from research supported by the federal government. For example, President Obama established a National Network for Manufacturing Innovation, which includes the Digital Manufacturing and Design Innovation Institute in Chicago. The Trump Budget eliminates funding for the Manufacturing Institutes.

The U.S. can only lead in research if we invest in research. We need a bipartisan deal to raise budget caps on both the defense and nondefense side so that important investments in infrastructure and innovation can continue. Thank you, Chairman Latta. I yield back.