Opening Statement of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
"Protecting Privacy, Promoting Policy: Evidence-Based Policymaking and the Future of
Education"
Full Committee Hearing | January 30, 2018 at 10 a.m.

Thank you Chairwoman Foxx for holding this hearing, and thank you to

the panelists for taking time out of your day to testify before the

Committee.

Many classrooms are undergoing a transition in student learning.

Today's students use electronic tablets, smartphones, online study tools,

blended learning software, and other various technological resources to

aid them in their studies. Teachers have the ability to extend learning

beyond the classroom using platforms that help them share multimedia

resources and engage parents in their children's learning.

Educational technology generates information that can be instrumental

in improving a student's learning experience. The data from these tools

allow teachers to more accurately assess student progress and provide interventions to ensure children are learning. Data can also assist schools in making district strategy, program, and curriculum decisions targeted at improving outcomes and meeting the needs of each student. Many states now use longitudinal data systems to link student achievement data from pre-K through grade 12, or even past college and into the workforce. This enables district and state leaders to make informed, data-driven policy decisions.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) also helps provide education practitioners with scientifically-sound, relevant, and accessible findings that can inform decision-making and instructional practice. Through the delivery of the National Assessment of Educational Progress; rigorous research projects and surveys, including randomized controlled trials; provision of technical assistance to states; and dissemination of research, IES provides a novel approach to harnessing data collection and

educational technology to improve instructional practice and systems

management.

Research and data shape our actions in almost every other field –

consider medicine, agriculture, aeronautics, and defense to name a few.

When we design and build a spacecraft, and there is a problem with it,

we don't throw out the whole idea and start from scratch. We learn from

the mistake and improve our work. But education has not been the same.

Technology, innovation, and the use of research to help shape policy in

the field of education is in its infancy. Nowhere is this more evident than

in the federal budget.

NIH spends $31.7 billion a year on medical research, and that does not

include other government, philanthropic, and private funding for

medical research and development. In contrast, the Institute of Education

Sciences (IES), the independent research arm of the Department of

Education, has an annual budget of approximately $195 million for

research and development, which equates to roughly two days of the NIH budget.

Research and data are incredible tools we can utilize across all levels of education to enhance teaching and learning. We are just scratching the surface, and we cannot afford to turn away from these efforts that will ultimately improve student outcomes.

As education technology use continues to expand, we must take the necessary steps to protect the privacy and data of students and their families. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act was enacted 40 years ago to address privacy concerns in a time of paper student records, not of online, cloud-based storage.

Congress must ensure student data is being used for only defined educational purposes and cannot be sold or used for private companies'

financial gain. Parents should know who has access to their children's data and how it is being used and protected. And teachers and school leaders need to understand how to protect properly student information while taking advantage of the powerful digital learning tools at their disposal.

As we examine student privacy and improve education research and data collection, we need to balance privacy with innovation. Students, teachers, and parents need to feel comfortable that student data is protected. At the same time, we need to be careful not to limit the advancement of new educational technologies or the breadth ways data can be used to improve student performance.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how they believe we can achieve this balancing act and other relevant issues regarding these topics. I yield back.