

**Questions for the Record**

**U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**

*“Nomination Hearing for Dr. Eric Lander to be Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy”*

April 29, 2021

**Questions for the Record from Chair Maria Cantwell to Dr. Eric Lander**

***Financial Conflicts of Interest:*** Given the considerable authority granted to the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, it is critical that you avoid any actual or apparent conflicts of interest. According to your financial disclosures, you hold investments in entities that may be affected by the work you would perform as Director, including companies in the medical, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical industries. As a part of your ethics agreement, you have said that you will divest from these investments.

***Question 1:*** If confirmed, will you commit to divesting from any investments you hold in entities that may present an actual or apparent conflict of interest, including but not limited to entities operating in the medical, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical industries?

***Answer:*** Yes.

***Question 2:*** Will you commit to complying with all of the provisions in the Ethics Agreement you signed on February 19, 2021?

***Answer:*** Yes.

***Conflicts of Interest in Future Employment.*** The OSTP's mission has direct interaction with research institutions like the Broad Institute. During your confirmation hearing you expressed an interest in returning to work at the Broad Institute after your tenure as Director of the OSTP is complete.

***Question 1:*** Please detail the steps that you will take as Director of OSTP to ensure that any decision the impacts the Broad Institute does not present a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest with your previous work at the Broad Institute and your intended return to that same institution.

***Answer:*** I will not participate personally or substantially in any particular matter that, to my knowledge, would have a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of the Broad Institute. I will not participate in any particular matter involving specific parties in which the Broad Institute is a party or represents a party. Furthermore, in the event that an actual or potential conflict arises with regard to Broad or any other entity or person, I will consult with an agency ethics official and take whatever steps are needed to resolve such conflict, including immediate recusal and/or divestiture.

***Question 2:*** Will you commit to providing this Committee, upon request, information regarding funding, contracts, or support directed towards the Broad Institute and your involvement in the decision to send funding, contracts, or support to that institution?

***Answer:*** I have resigned from my position as CEO of the Broad Institute and I am on an unpaid leave of absence from my position as tenured professor there. If confirmed as OSTP Director, if requested, I commit to working with this Committee to provide information regarding funding, contracts, or support directed towards the Broad Institute by OSTP while I serve in this capacity. Moreover, I commit to this Committee that I will recuse myself from any and all decisions that could potentially or actually direct funding, contracts, or support towards the Broad Institute.

***Diversity in STEM:*** The nation has struggled to increase STEM diversity. Congress has authorized a number of programs to broaden participation in STEM, but we have yet to see any significant progress.

***Question 1:*** If confirmed as Director of OSTP, what concrete steps will you take that would garner additional support for and expand participation in STEM?

***Answer:*** I understand that we are not drawing upon the full potential of our country's talent, owing the long-term underrepresentation of various groups, including women and people of color. Increasing diversity and advancing equity in STEM is critical to our success in science and technology, and it requires a systematic approach.

We need to invite and engage more people in STEM, embrace and lift up more role models, give more students amazing hands-on opportunities to learn and engage in the scientific enterprise, create more inclusive and diverse learning and working environments, and monitor, measure, evaluate and report on progress towards these goals.

If confirmed, I'm committed to working with educators, community thought leaders, science and technology stakeholders, public and private institutions, agencies, and Congress to develop a plan to carry out the President's vision of a more inclusive and equitable nation.

***Question 2:*** How do you address concerns that your decision to toast Dr. Watson, and your failure to include recognition for two notable female scientists is evidence that you will perpetuate stereotypes and not take active steps to promote the work of minorities and women in STEM if you are confirmed?

***Answer:*** I believe that supporting women and people of color in STEM is critical. I understand that science has not always been welcoming — and has often been hostile — to individuals from underrepresented groups. This is such an important issue because the lack of inclusion is not only deeply unfair, but is also one of the greatest risks to America's success. Throughout my career, I have worked to improve diversity and inclusion in science.

If confirmed, I am committed to making full inclusion and equitable outcomes a high priority, including building the most diverse OSTP and PCAST in history and developing a plan to increase the numbers of women and people from underrepresented groups in the science and technology professions by 50 percent. I would welcome the opportunity to work with you on this.

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### **Questions for the Record from Sen. Raphael Warnock to Dr. Eric Lander**

***Inclusion of Underserved Communities:*** In my home state, Georgia Tech, Morehouse College, and PRENEURology Global have launched the Southeast Minority Business Development Agency - Business Growth Hub, which will serve as a network of entrepreneur spaces, education pathways, and engagement programs – specifically focused on minority entrepreneurs and students.

***Question:*** How can OSTP better work with agencies, Congress, and the university and startup ecosystem to bring research out of the lab and into underserved, underrepresented localities that need more opportunities for new businesses and new jobs?

***Answer:*** I understand how important it is for agencies, STEM ecosystems, Congress, and OSTP to work together to turn research into business and job opportunities for those in underserved communities.

As indicated in the American Jobs Plan, the Administration is calling on Congress to invest in workforce training that prioritizes underserved communities and communities hit hardest by our transforming economy. It asks for the support of investments that ensure those from underserved groups have greater access to new infrastructure jobs. The President’s plan also calls for support of community college partnerships that build capacity to deliver job training programs based on in-demand skills. I am also in full support of the President’s [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#).

If confirmed, I am committed to working with agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, the Department of Education, and the Department of Labor to support the development of policies and programs that deliver resources and benefits equitably to all. Likewise, I am committed to working with agencies, STEM education ecosystems, and Congress to support economic and scientific growth in underserved communities. I am also personally interested to learn more about the Southeast Minority Business Development Agency - Business Growth Hub, to understand ways in which it may be a useful model for other underserved communities.

***Innovation and Efficiency:*** Our most serious global challenges are increasingly at the intersection of scientific disciplines with significant societal impacts. Our vulnerable populations and disadvantaged communities are and will withstand the worst of health and environmental challenges. Unfortunately, our federal research agencies are often siloed both internally and across agencies in their approaches and missions. The researchers in our universities in Georgia often want to tackle challenges at this intersection – such as the health impacts of energy technology – but are stymied by the current bureaucratic structures of our research agencies.

***Question:*** How will you work to bring our agencies together to make real change that spurs new discoveries and innovation?

***Answer:*** I understand how important it is for the success of our research community that the Federal government take a holistic approach in supporting new discoveries and innovation. And, I know that this does not always occur.

Optimizing interagency collaboration is central to OSTP's mission and OSTP is uniquely positioned to carry out this goal, through its leadership of National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), which helps to coordinate science and technology across the Federal agencies and support collaborative initiatives and activities across agencies.

If confirmed, I am committed to utilizing the NSTC to its full capacity, supporting agencies that model convergent approaches to their work, and identifying and supporting other ways that agencies can support the intersection of scientific disciplines with the potential of significant societal impact.

**Improved Screening Technology:** As we have seen throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, America's seniors went without preventive health services for far too long. One major consequence of this is the substantial reduction in cancer screenings among those at greatest risk for cancer: adults over age 65. The risks are further exacerbated by the health inequities we face in the U.S. that continue to disproportionately impact African-Americans. In August 2020, NCI Director Dr. Sharpless warned of an increase in late-stage cancer diagnosis due to missed screenings.

**Question:** As the Director of OSTP, what would you do to ensure that the Administration pursues policies that promote innovative screening technology to reduce the number of late-stage cancer diagnoses?

**Answer:** As a life scientist who has worked on cancer and other diseases, I appreciate the importance that screening plays in reducing late-stage cancer diagnoses. I know that recent advances in science and technology offer new opportunities to detect cancers earlier and to ensure access that is broader and equitable to all. I understand how important it is to support policies that promote such technology.

I know the President supports advanced research and screening efforts found through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Comprehensive Cancer Control and the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Programs, and the Food and Drug Administration's Oncology Center of Excellence, for example. I am also in full support of the President's [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#). The pandemic has disproportionately impacted African-Americans and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.

If confirmed, I will work with agencies to support the development of policies and programs that promote innovative technologies to improve medical diagnoses and care and deliver resources and benefits equitably to all.

**Reliable and accurate scientific information:** These days, as we deal with the worst public health crisis in generations, it's more important than ever to have reliable and accurate scientific information. We clearly need rigorous, peer-reviewed analyses of research to guide our decisions.

**Question:** Dr. Lander, how would you work with the scientific societies and publishers to produce high-quality scientific analyses and articles while ensuring policymakers, community leaders, and the greater scientific community has access to potentially lifesaving and life-improving information?

**Answer:** I understand the importance of ensuring that we have reliable and accurate scientific information, especially on topics with lifesaving and life-improving implications. I also recognize that it is important that information is rapidly and fully accessible to policymakers, community leaders, and the greater scientific community.

To execute on these goals, there needs to be funding and collaboration mechanisms to generate critical data related to public health as well as mechanisms and norms for ensuring rapid and open sharing of data sets and publications. The pandemic has led to innovation in these areas and it will be important to capture and evaluate the learnings and see how they might be reflected in policy.

These goals also relate the importance of scientific integrity, including within the federal government. OSTP is in full support of the President's [Memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking](#). To implement this policy, OSTP recently launched a multi-agency Scientific Integrity Task Force. As noted in a recent press release, "the Task Force will review existing Federal scientific-integrity policies to identify effective solutions that will help improve the lives of the American people, inform innovative and equitable policy, and revitalize the confidence of the American public in its government."

If confirmed, I am committed to supporting efforts to capture and evaluate the learnings during the pandemic about innovative scientific practices; supporting the Scientific Integrity Task Force; and exploring additional ways in cooperation with the scientific community to ensure scientific information used in decisions is of the highest quality and publicly available.