Opening Statement
Chairman Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)
Hearing on "To the Cloud! The Cloudy Role of FedRAMP in IT Modernization"
Subcommittee on Government Operations
July 17, 2019

I want to welcome everyone today to a hearing on the topic of cloud computing, specifically federal acquisition of *secure* cloud computing services. Cloud computing has the potential to help agencies modernize their information technology (IT), while saving taxpayers money by eliminating the cost to the government of building, operating, and maintaining those IT products themselves.

The Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program – or FedRAMP – was established in 2011 to provide a standardized government-wide approach to security assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring of cloud computing services. In short, FedRAMP is supposed to reduce the redundancies of federal cloud migration. Recognizing the potential of cloud computing, the Obama Administration established FedRAMP with the goals of:

- Reducing duplicative efforts, inconsistencies, and cost inefficiencies with the security authorization process;
- Establishing a public-private partnership to promote innovation and the advancement of more secure information technologies;
- Using an agile and flexible framework that will enable the federal government to accelerate the adoption of cloud computing;
- Creating transparent standards and processes for security authorizations, and;
- Allowing agencies to leverage security authorizations on a governmentwide scale.

Unfortunately, since the program began, cloud service providers – some of whom are my constituents – have expressed concerns regarding FedRAMP's efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency. These stakeholders have noted that the process to become FedRAMP-certified can be expensive and time consuming. What was supposed to be a six-month process costing $250,000, instead could take years and cost a company millions of dollars. In an audit of the FedRAMP program management office's goals and objectives, the General Services Administration (GSA) Inspector General found that, "while the FedRAMP PMO has taken action to address some of these concerns, additional action is needed to strengthen the PMO to better meet the needs and requirements of the program."

Last month, the Trump Administration issued its Federal Cloud Computing Strategy, called Cloud Smart, which reaffirmed the Administration's support for FedRAMP. While acknowledging that the FedRAMP program management office has made improvements to the program and has drastically reduced the amount of time it takes to authorize a cloud service provider, the policy also notes that there is still a lack of reciprocity across agencies in adopting FedRAMP authorizations, which has led to significant duplication of effort when assessing the security of a cloud service offering. The policy also notes that a large number of agency-specific processes has made it complicated for agencies to issue an authorization to operate for cloud services, even when a cloud service provider has already been authorized at other agencies.

The federal government must do better when it comes to acquiring cloud computing technologies. We cannot afford to repeat the siloed processes of past IT acquisition that has led to spending $90 billion annually, mostly on maintaining legacy IT systems. However, we cannot leverage the potential of cloud computing if the processes are slower than the speed at which the technology advances.

In a report published in April 2019, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) analyzed IT Dashboard data of 16 agencies to evaluate those agencies' use of cloud services for fiscal years 2016 through 2018 and projected use in 2019. In fiscal year 2016, those 16 agencies reported 8 percent of their IT investments, on average, used cloud services with that average projected to increase to 11% by fiscal year 2019. Some agencies such as the Social Security Administration and GSA, projected that nearly 40 percent of their total IT investments would be for cloud computing services, a 100 percent increase.

As more of the federal government continues to increase its investment in cloud computing services, I believe we can achieve the original goals laid out for FedRAMP. Last year, I introduced legislation with Ranking Member Meadows to codify the program and enable wider agency reuse of existing authorizations to operate. We are working on legislation this year that would maintain those two objectives while also helping to improve the program by increasing the use of automation and providing for more transparency, all while continuing to ensure that cloud computing services are secure for use by federal agencies. The bill establishes a presumption of adequacy for those security assessments that have been FedRAMP certified to increase agency reuse of authorizations. It requires FedRAMP to establish and make public metrics on the length and quality of assessments and report progress towards meeting those metrics to Congress. It calls on FedRAMP to find ways to automate their process to increase the efficiency of security assessments. I hope these are all needed improvements we can agree on.

I want to thank all our witnesses for appearing at today's hearing, and I look forward to hearing from them about the current state of FedRAMP, how the process can be improved, and about the future of cloud computing in the federal government.

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