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Opening Statement Ranking Member Robin Kelly Subcommittee on Information Technology Hearing on "Reviewing Challenges in Federal IT Acquisition" March 28, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you Chairman Meadows and Ranking Member Connolly for your continued leadership and partnership as our subcommittees continue working together to improve how federal agencies manage their information technology (IT) projects.

The Government Accountability Office's (GAO) 2017 High-Risk Report makes clear the continued challenges agencies are facing when managing their IT acquisitions. GAO states and I quote, "federal IT investments too frequently fail or incur cost overruns and schedule slippages while contributing little to mission-related outcomes."

GAO's report highlights the need for President Trump's administration to strengthen, not hinder, IT acquisition reform.

The President's action and inaction in certain key areas, is likely to have the opposite effect, and threaten to undermine agency efforts to improve in their management of IT investments.

First, on January 23, 2017, President Trump issued an order freezing federal employee hiring. GAO has reported in the past that hiring freezes have, and I quote, "disrupted agency operations, and in some cases increase costs to the Government."

A hiring freeze impairs the ability of agencies to attract new and talented computer programmers and engineers that could help close any of the skill gaps currently existing at agencies. It will likely exacerbate, rather than remedy, the challenges agencies report facing when it comes to hiring the most skilled, tech-savvy workforce, making these agencies not only less productive, but less effective.

Second, the President's continued delay in filling key IT leadership positions deprives the government of the leadership commitment needed to carry out IT acquisition reform. Notably, to date, the President has not named a new federal Chief Information Officer (CIO) to replace Tony Scott who departed from the position earlier this year. As GAO's High-Risk Report makes clear, having a federal CIO in place is critical to ensuring that agencies are being provided the necessary guidance to improve in their management of IT investments.

Nor has the President nominated a Director for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), an agency that places a critical role in securing highly sensitive information and background data on over 2 million federal employees. Last month, this Committee sent a bipartisan letter to the President urging him to, and I quote, “nominate without delay a highly qualified Director to lead the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).” To date, the President has not acted in response to this Committee’s request.

Finally, it is unclear whether the Trump Administration will follow through with issuing critical guidance that would assist agencies in improving the scope of cybersecurity protections in federal acquisitions. This guidance was first developed under the Obama Administration, and was reportedly close to being finalized by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) last year.

Earlier today, myself, along with Chairman Hurd and Ranking Member Connolly wrote to OMB to request information on the status of issuing this important guidance. We look forward to receiving OMB’s response.

I want to thank the witnesses for testifying today. We have a lot of work ahead to improve upon our Federal IT Acquisition processes. Your expertise and recommendations will be invaluable to our subcommittees as we examine ways in which to help the federal government improve in its management of IT acquisitions and operations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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