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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515–6143

MAJORITY (202) 225–5074
MINORITY (202) 225–5051

http://oversight.house.gov

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Robin Kelly
Hearing on "GAO High Risk Focus: Cybersecurity"
July 25, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Chairman Meadows for holding this important hearing. Ms. Kent, welcome to today's hearing, and thank you for testifying today and sharing your vision for cybersecurity as the new Federal CIO. And Mr. Dodaro, special thanks to you for the extensive work you and all of the dedicated professionals at GAO put into providing this special mid-cycle High-Risk report on cybersecurity.

GAO's newly issued report raises serious concerns about our nation's ability to confront cybersecurity risks. GAO found key deficiencies that could hinder the government's progress in strengthening the nation's cyber defenses. For example, GAO found that the Trump Administration's plans failed to include basic components needed to carry out a national strategy for protecting critical cyber infrastructure. Among the missing components were details about performance measurements and milestones for determining whether the country's cyber objectives were being met, and the resources that would be needed to carry out those objectives.

GAO's report highlights the need for the Administration to "develop and execute a more comprehensive federal strategy for national cybersecurity and global cyberspace." It underscores the importance of having a cybersecurity coordinator in the White House to develop a more robust cybersecurity strategy for the country.

But here again, the Trump Administration is not rising to the challenge. Two months ago, the President's National Security Advisor, John Bolton, eliminated the position of White House Cybersecurity Coordinator. This decision was contrary to a prior GAO recommendation to have a "White House Cybersecurity Coordinator in the Executive Office of the President develop an overarching federal cybersecurity strategy."

At a time when our nation is facing persistent cyber threats, ranging from foreign adversaries who seek to undermine our elections, to criminal hackers who steal sensitive data, the Administration's decision to eliminate a key cybersecurity position in the White House should raise alarm.

Today's report also shows that the number of Americans whose personal information has been compromised in government and private sector data breaches is growing, and there is a need for stronger measures and Congressional action to protect consumer privacy.

GAO found that "[t]he vast number of individuals potentially affected by data breaches at federal agencies and private sector entities in recent years increases concerns that [personally identifiable information] is not being properly protected."

GAO's finding is supported by two recent reports that highlight the heightened challenge public and private sector organizations are facing in securing sensitive data. In April, Verizon issued a report showing that

in the past 12 months alone, there were "over 53,000 incidents and 2,216 confirmed data breaches." And just last week, the Attorney General's Cyber-Digital Task Force released a report showing that "there were at least 686 data breaches reported in the first quarter of 2018, resulting in the theft of as many as 1.4 billion records."

Last year's data breach at Equifax, in which over 143 million Americans had their personal information stolen, and the 2015 breach at OPM, which affected approximately 22.1 million individuals, illustrate the massive scale of harm to privacy and security that data breaches have.

To address the growing concerns about privacy, GAO recommended that Congress strengthen our privacy laws, the majority of which were written well before the development of new technologies, ranging from the use of social networking sites to facial recognition technology in many mobile applications. Congress should heed GAO's recommendation and reexamine how our privacy laws can be strengthened to ensure that consumers' personal privacy is adequately protected.

I want to thank our witnesses for testifying today, and I look forward to hearing your testimony on how we can improve the nation's cybersecurity.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Contact: Aryele Bradford, Deputy Communications Director, (202) 226-5181.