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House of Representatives

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Opening Statement Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)

Oversight Subcommittees on Information Technology and Government Operations: “The Federal Information Technology Acquisition and Reform Act Scorecard”

December 6, 2016

Chairman Hurd, Chairman Meadows, and Ranking Member Kelly, I appreciate this latest joint subcommittee hearing to examine implementation of the Federal Information Technology Acquisition and Reform Act, better known as FITARA or Issa-Connolly. Our bipartisan legislation represents the first major reform of the laws governing federal IT management since the seminal Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996. When I was Chairman of Fairfax County, I told our staff we needed three things to be successful: a clear mission, a passion for that mission, and metrics to measure our progress. With FITARA’s passage, we clarified our mission, and these scorecards give us metrics to measure our progress.

I am pleased to see these subcommittees continuing to exercise oversight to ensure that FITARA does not fall short of achieving its full potential, as similar pieces of legislation have in past. Since our last hearing in May, I am encouraged by how quickly the Administration and the majority of federal agencies have embraced this effort. I appreciate the leadership of federal CIO, Tony Scott, and the Office of Management and Budget, which issued superb implementation guidance. I hope for continued leadership in the new Administration and a renewed focus on implementation.

As I stated at the last hearing in May, the results of the scorecard should not be considered a “scarlet letter” on the backs of agencies, but rather a lesson for agencies on how to improve. The scorecard process should be dynamic, continually incorporating stakeholder feedback with the possibility of eventually including all seven pillars of FITARA. We have received favorable feedback from the agency CIOs on the components of the scorecard, but recognize that there is always room to improve the metrics that are used to determine agency progress. The enormous amount of feedback we have received thus far from our stakeholders is proof agencies are taking FITARA implementation seriously.

Charged by Congress to provide quarterly progress reports, the GAO examined the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) steps to consolidate data centers, enhance agency transparency, and implement incremental development. These metrics were selected because their implementation will have a demonstrable benefit on IT acquisitions and operations, and this data is updated and available on a quarterly basis.

The scorecard is a tool of both Congressional oversight of FITARA and CIO empowerment. FITARA requires CIOs to certify that IT investments are adequately implementing incremental development. We wanted to include CIO authorities in the scorecard because this will tell us if CIOs are being given the tools to succeed, and if they are not then that becomes either an issue of additional Congressional oversight or a foothold for CIOs to assert themselves under the auspices of FITARA. It is important that Congress continue its oversight and urge OMB to clarify its guidance directing agencies to make information about major IT investments publicly available.

On a related front, I was proud to join my colleague Will Hurd in introducing the Modernizing Government Technology Act (MGT Act). The bill makes a significant upfront investment to retire vulnerable, large-scale legacy systems affecting multiple agencies. The bill allows agencies to use savings generated through FITARA and other reforms to make investments in cloud transition. The MGT Act passed easily through the Oversight and Government Reform Committee and the House Floor. I am hopeful to see its passage through the Senate, in the 115th Congress. We drafted FITARA to gain better insight on the magnitude of our legacy IT infrastructure, and MGT will help us respond to the investment needs we have discovered.

I would like to express some concern with the lack of perceived support for FITARA implementation many CIOs have experienced with their agency leadership. I find it unacceptable for any of the agencies to be working against the intent of FITARA. Secretaries ignoring the critical role of CIOs in FITARA implementation and in directing IT investment defeats the purpose of the legislation. We have found that some agencies are struggling to elevate the CIO position to its appropriate management level. I look forward to hearing from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the State Department (State) today about their efforts to streamline CIO reporting authorities. I was pleased to see that DHS surpassed its savings goal by reporting \$248 million from consolidation of data centers. However, I have concerns about the Department's lack of a Strategic Plan. It was disappointing to see that the State Department reported no savings from data center consolidation or IT Portfolio review. State has also underperformed in assessing the risk in their major IT investments. I look forward to working with Mr. Wiggins to improve State's performance moving forward.

I crafted this legislation with Chairman Issa to streamline the IT acquisitions process and properly utilize the \$80 billion the government currently spends on IT. In 2017, we will continue our oversight of the strict FITARA implementation while evolving the metrics used to verify agency progress. We benefit from having codified these principles and will hold the next Administration accountable to these reforms. This hearing will be followed by many others as we continue our efforts to aid agencies in their adoption of reforms. I want to thank each of the witnesses here today for their contribution to improving government operations.

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