Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 12, 2019

The Honorable Walter G. Copan
Director
National Institute of Standards and Technology
100 Bureau Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20899

Director Copan,

We write to request an update of efforts from the National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST) to launch a collaborative process to develop a voluntary framework to assist in better assessing, managing, promoting, and communicating the societal and ethical aspects of artificial intelligence (AI) implementation.

AI has the potential to greatly enhance and transform American economic competitiveness, national security and society. Stakeholders around the globe are examining how to address the potential negative societal impacts of AI, such as bias and discrimination. As other countries ramp-up their own efforts to lead the world in AI, we firmly believe that the United States must remain the leader in AI technology and innovation. In order to ensure this, there must be greater leadership and engagement from our federal government. We strongly believe developing a voluntary framework for societal and ethical issues like bias and discrimination will enable our country to achieve our strategic goals and assist other countries to follow our country's lead on AI standards and best practices.

We understand that NIST has recently released a plan for prioritizing federal agency engagement in the development of standards for AI in which they recommend the federal government "commit to deeper, consistent, long-term engagement" towards fostering the "reliable, robust, and trustworthy AI technology development."[1] However, the plan indicates that "the ability to understand and analyze the decisions of AI systems and measure their trustworthiness is limited." The issue of AI trustworthiness appears ready-made for NIST's experience bringing together government, industry, and other stakeholders in cooperatively developing useful voluntary frameworks.

NIST has considerable experience with open, transparent, and collaborative processes given the success of the *Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity* and the on-going process to develop the *Privacy Framework – An Enterprise Risk Management Tool*. In fact, given NIST's "long track record of successfully and collaboratively working with the private sector and federal agencies to develop guidelines," the Institute is uniquely qualified to undertake this important and necessary effort.[2] Specifically, we request that this voluntary framework include a focus on the development of strategies, guidelines, and best practices for AI trustworthiness that would evolve as the technology advances, allowing innovation and ethical practices to develop in tandem.
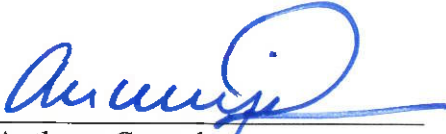
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[1] https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2019/08/10/ai_standards_fedengagement_plan_9aug2019.pdf
[2] https://www.nist.gov/privacy-framework/frequently-asked-questions

We support development of a framework and would appreciate prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Anthony Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress

Pete Olson
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

cc:
Michael Kratsios, Chief Technology Officer of the United States and Deputy Assistant to the
President at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy