

Senator Mazie K. Hirono

Questions for the Record following hearing on April 27, 2017 entitled:

“Intellectual Property – Driver of Innovation: Making Our Lives Healthier, Safer, and more Productive”

For All Witnesses:

1. Last year, a report the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) that found that at the current rate of progress, women inventors will not reach parity in patenting until 2092. Only 18.8 of all patents had at least one women inventor in 2010. In addition, where women are the primary inventor, their patents are concentrated in areas such as travel goods, personal belongings, jewelry, and apparel.

- a. What is your company doing to encourage more innovation by women?

Supporting innovation is central to our core values at Sproxil. We have identified, recruited and trained capable technology and operations professionals and promoted women to key global leadership positions within the company. Our goal is to continue and expand our efforts, especially in offering early career opportunities to women who have expressed an interest in innovation.

2. In an article in the April 2017 issue of the Atlantic, entitled “Why is Silicon Valley So Awful to Women?”, the author cites a report from the Center for Talent Innovation which found that when women drop out of tech, it is not typically for family reasons or because they dislike the work. Rather, they drop out for reasons such as feeling stalled in their career or undermining behavior from managers.

- a. What best practices do you use at your company to encourage women to remain at your company and support them in pursuing patents for the work they are doing?

At Sproxil, we have a strong track record of providing significant career growth opportunities for high-performing staff, including promoting talented professional women to highly-visible global leadership positions. We believe the diversity of our global leadership team is important, especially as we tackle an international problem consumers face irrespective of their social identities. Our company culture is based on the principles of meritocracy and actively promotes inclusion through our company policies and practices. We will continue to seek new ways to improve our policies, benefits and professional development opportunities, as we contribute to global efforts aimed at creating a more inclusive workplace for women and minorities.

For Dr. Gogo:

1. Your company Sproxil received \$1.8 million in 2011 from Acumen Fund. According to a 2015 report from Harvard Business School and the USPTO, approval of a patent increases the startup's probability of securing funding from venture capitalists, 2.3 percentage increase over three years.
 - a. Please explain the importance patent approval made in your ability to secure funding.

The Patents for Humanity award recognized existing investments we had made in developing and securing our intellectual property, and provided us with further encouragement to increase our research efforts. It also boosted the company's position as we raised multiple rounds of financing from debt and equity investors who often see a strong intellectual property protection strategy with demonstrable results as a favorable asset.