

Statement of Senator Mazie K. Hirono
On the Inventor Diversity for Economic Advancement (IDEA) Act
October 17, 2019

I would like to briefly note that the Inventor Diversity for Economic Advancement, or “IDEA,” Act is no longer on the agenda today. This is an important bill that would have had the Patent and Trademark Office collect demographic data from patent applicants on a voluntary basis—a key first step to close the patent gap facing women, people of color, and other groups.

I want to thank Senator Tillis for joining me in introducing the bill. I would also like to thank Senator Coons and Senator Harris for joining as cosponsors.

I’m told the bill was pulled from the agenda due to opposition from certain conservative groups, who objected to the PTO collecting data on patentees’ sexual orientations.

I really hope this wasn’t the case. Sexual orientation was one of a number of personal characteristics the PTO would have collected from patent applicants **on a voluntary basis**.

The information would have had no impact on who received a patent. It would have been used solely to determine if there are groups being

excluded from our innovation economy. This is information we should all want as we help set the course for our country's future.

Mr. Chairman, I hope the IDEA Act is scheduled for a vote soon. And I hope it gets the strong bipartisan support it deserves.