

Opening Statement [as prepared]

**Ranking Member Rob Portman**

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Hearing:

“Putting People First – Building Trust in Government Through  
Customer Experience”

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Peters.

I’m glad we’re having this hearing on the bipartisan issue of customer experience with government. In this committee we hear the phrase “good government” a lot, commonly in the context of accountability and transparency. However, I think “good government” also means efficiency. I believe that government should have a limited role in people’s lives; but in order for people to focus on their families, jobs, and growing our economy, their interactions with the government need to be efficient. People must be able to get what they need and move on with their lives. This involves everything from applying for grants to support their small businesses, to applying for veterans’ benefits, to waiting in line at the airport.

For example, I've heard that the Ohio Department of Transportation has found the federal Department of Transportation's "Common Application" feature convenient because it allows applicants to apply for multiple infrastructure funding opportunities through one application.

On the other hand, I am concerned that some Ohio businesses have recently had problems with a General Services Administration (GSA) website for government contracts that was developed in-house. These businesses have had trouble getting paid for work they did for the government, or had agencies stop working with them because the website's system for registration renewal was not working correctly.

In 2018, Congress passed my *21<sup>st</sup> Century Integrated Digital Experience Act*, or the *21<sup>st</sup> Century IDEA Act*. I'm glad to see Ms. Dorris and Mr. Lira here today, whom I know from my time working on that bill. Among other things, the *21<sup>st</sup> Century IDEA Act* requires an agency that maintains a website or digital service to ensure that it has a consistent appearance, is accessible to individuals with disabilities, has a search function, has an industry-standard secure connection, and

is generally designed around user needs. These are all common-sense elements.

It also requires that each agency make available an online, mobile-friendly, digital service option for any in-person government transaction or paper-based process in a manner that decreases cost and improves customer experience. Unfortunately, we know that many of the requirements in this law remain unimplemented. I look forward to a discussion with our witnesses of why that is and how Congress can increase oversight to ensure full implementation.

White House efforts in the Trump administration and continuing in the Biden administration have begun to move agencies in the right direction. In December, President Biden signed an Executive Order on customer experience with government. I may not agree with everything in there, but I think it's a good step forward on prioritizing the issue.

I'm always open to learning about new legislative ideas, but I think we should also focus on using the tools we already have, particularly through increased oversight of the recent mandates from Congress and initiatives within the executive branch. There is also a lot we can learn from our private sector, which is always developing

new innovations we can tap into. We must also ensure we are good stewards of taxpayer money, and respect the balance of state and federal jurisdictions on which our country was built.

I look forward to hearing our witnesses' ideas on how we can prioritize making our government work better for the people. Thank you.