

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 9, 2019

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As you begin work on the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20), we write to ask for your continued support of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Office of STEM Engagement, most recently known as the Office of Education.

We were pleased that the Fiscal Year 2019 Omnibus bill provided \$110 million of funding for the NASA Office of STEM Engagement. The current Administration has announced its support for public investment in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education, including a signed memorandum in 2017 devoting \$200 million per year for STEM funding in our nation's public schools. Given the Administration's support for increasing pathways to STEM careers, we were disappointed by the President's budget proposal to eliminate funding for the NASA Office of STEM Engagement in FY 2020.

Our nation continues to experience changing economic and workforce-related trends. As continued innovation opens up new opportunities and possibilities, an emphasis on technical skills and prowess in STEM education can help to better position our future generation of students for evolving 21st Century careers. Through its creative programming, community engagement, and financial assistance for students, the NASA Office of STEM Engagement serves as a dynamic and positive force for encouraging students from all backgrounds to learn about exciting opportunities in STEM disciplines.

NASA's Office of STEM Engagement includes the Space Grant College and Fellowship Program (Space Grant), a competitive, state-federal partnership that functions through consortia in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. With nearly 1,000 partner institutions, this program promotes wide-ranging aerospace and other NASA-relevant STEM education activities. For every dollar that NASA provides, Space Grant consortia contribute an equal or greater amount from non-federal sources to maximize STEM engagement with students nationwide. According to NASA program data, over 80% of participating students in a particular year successfully land a job in a STEM-related industry, NASA Academia, or gain admission to a STEM graduate program. The structure of the space grant consortia model is effective in promoting state and local based programs that encourage STEM education within the context of unique and local communities.

Additionally, the NASA Office of STEM Engagement supports the Minority University Research and Educational Project (MUREP), which provides financial assistance to the nation's Minority Serving Institutions through internships, scholarships, and fellowship grants and cooperative agreements. Additionally, financial assistance in the form of stipends, tuition offsets, and research experiences better

enable underrepresented and underserved students to enter our STEM workforce. These opportunities and forms of assistance help to diversify and prepare our workforce for the careers of the future.

We recognize that that you face significant budgetary challenges, but we strongly urge you to support the NASA Office of STEM Engagement because of how important its mission is to boosting the nation's workforce competitiveness. For Fiscal Year 2018, Congress appropriated \$100 million, and in Fiscal Year 2019, Congress appropriated \$110 million in funding for the NASA Office of STEM Engagement; this level of funding helps support programs for students at every level from K-12 to community college and doctoral degree programs.

The Administration has demonstrated interest in space exploration by signing a space policy directive with the goal of returning humans to the moon, while NASA continues planning exploratory missions to Mars. As we seek to successfully explore the far reaching expanses of our universe, we should also strive to maintain a commitment to educating the next generation inside and outside of the classroom. We greatly appreciate your leadership and consideration of this request to maintain funding for the NASA's Office of STEM Engagement. Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this request.

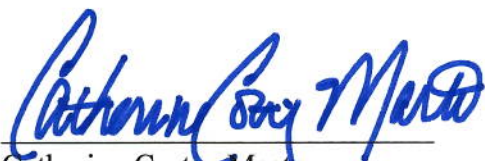
Sincerely,



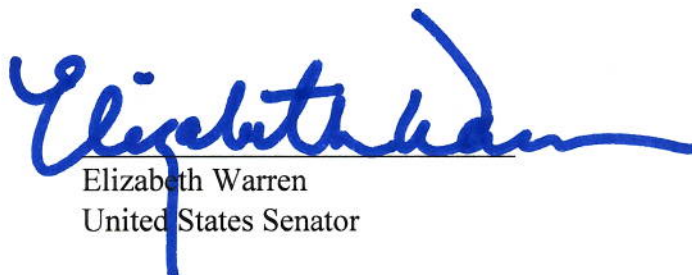
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



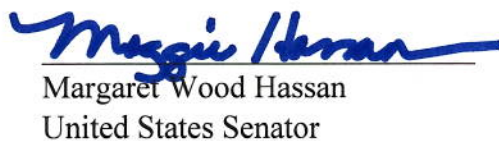
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United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
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United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



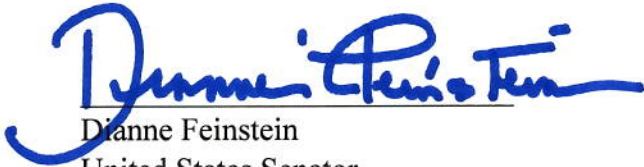
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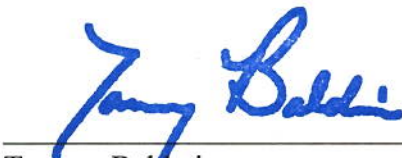
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