

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March __, 2016

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman, Subcommittee on CJS
U.S. House of Representatives
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael Honda
Acting Ranking Member
Subcommittee on CJS
U.S. House of Representatives
1713 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson and Acting Ranking Member Honda:

When the Subcommittee for Commerce, Justice and Science deliberates appropriations for Fiscal Year 2017, we strongly urge you to fully fund the Commercial Crew Program at the President's requested level of \$1,185 million. The Commercial Crew Program remains our most critical near-term civil space goal. This request directly reflects NASA's existing fixed price contracts for certifying and flying two independent American astronaut transportation systems. We must not make it more difficult for NASA to certify the safety of these systems for America's astronauts.

For more than 50 years, NASA has been responsible for flying American heroes into space. And for all of that time, American companies have worked hand-in-hand with NASA to accomplish this mission. Today, as NASA shifts focus back to its core and unique mission of exploring the solar system, American companies are creating their own systems to fly American astronauts into Low Earth Orbit safely, reliably, and efficiently.

NASA has contracted with two U.S. companies to develop and operate safe and reliable crew transportation to the International Space Station and end our dependence on Russia. Over the past few years, the Russian prices have continued to rise, their vehicles have encountered technical issues, and the geopolitical situation has grown more complex.

Partnering with the commercial space industry for access to low Earth orbit and the ISS, our \$100 billion national asset, will double ISS scientific utilization hours, providing tremendous value to the taxpayer. Through the Commercial Crew Program, NASA provides oversight and insight through industry partners' development of their crew transportation systems, and NASA will certify those systems to carry NASA astronauts to and from the ISS.

The President's request represents a decrease from Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations and will allow Americans to launch into space in 2017. Funding below this level, however, will require a renegotiation of the contracts, and a significant delay. In addition, each delay will require NASA to purchase additional flights from Russia at an increasing price.

We appreciate your ongoing support of NASA's Commercial Crew Program and urge you to provide full funding in FY2017 to keep America on track to reaching the stars.

Sincerely,