

April 30, 2025

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

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Grace Meng
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Moran and Rogers, and Ranking Members Van Hollen and Meng:

We write to express our profound alarm to the reported Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposal emerging from the White House's Office of Management and Budget to cut an astonishing 47% of NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD) budget in a single year.

Such a drastic reduction would inflict immediate and irreparable damage upon the nation's space science enterprise. If enacted, these cuts would necessitate the premature termination of dozens of currently operating, highly productive scientific spacecraft at Earth, across the Solar System and peering into deep space. These unique national assets, representing billions of dollars in prior taxpayer investment and decades of scientific and engineering effort, cannot be easily replaced, and their loss would create an immediate void in critical data collection and demonstrated national leadership.

This budget would halt the development of nearly all future NASA science missions, wasting billions already invested, abandoning carefully forged international and commercial partnerships, and discarding the strategic priorities established through the community consensus of the National Academies' decadal surveys. The Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, currently in final assembly and testing at the Goddard Space Flight Center, represents a top national scientific priority and investment of over 4 billion dollars. This program is an excellent example of effective management, meeting its proposed schedule and staying on budget.

The impact extends far beyond mission hardware. These cuts would eviscerate space science research and analysis programs, crippling university departments, research institutions, and NASA centers. It would decimate the nation's STEM talent pipeline, eliminating vital training opportunities for the next generation of scientists and engineers and likely lead to widespread layoffs within this highly skilled workforce, both in the government and industry. If enacted, this budget will have real downstream impacts on America's ability to field next generation technology, impacting U.S. national security and economic development. This includes the vital work of Planetary Defense – finding, tracking, and characterizing asteroids that could pose a threat to Earth – and in heliophysics, which helps protect mission-critical communications and national defense satellites from solar storms and other space weather events.

A 47% reduction to NASA Science would represent a surrender of American leadership in a domain it has long defined. For decades, NASA has been the world's preeminent space science agency, pursuing exploration that pushes the boundaries of knowledge and technology. At a time when other nations, notably China, are increasing their space science capabilities and cadence, such a self-inflicted wound would cede our hard-won

leadership. U.S. global influence would be diminished and we would be abandoning our role as a leader in the peaceful, open, scientific exploration of space. NASA's scientific endeavors exemplify American ingenuity, perseverance, and commitment to discovery – values cherished by the public, who consistently rank science among NASA's most important activities.

Fundamental scientific exploration is a unique responsibility of the public sector. While commercial partnerships can enhance space exploration, the pursuit of foundational knowledge-exploring distant worlds, searching for life beyond Earth, unraveling the mysteries of the cosmos-requires sustained, patient investment in cutting-edge technology without an immediate profit motive. This is a role only NASA can fulfill. As mandated by law in Title 51 of the U.S. Code, NASA's first objective is "the expansion of human knowledge of the Earth and of phenomena in the atmosphere and space." Space science missions provide a constant stream of novel information, challenging our understanding of the universe, stress-testing scientific theories in extreme environments, and inspiring millions to pursue the careers of tomorrow. From discovering ocean worlds and ancient lakes on Mars to measuring the echoes of the Big Bang, NASA science addresses fundamental questions about our origins and place in the cosmos. It reflects the best of the human spirit – our innate curiosity, our drive to explore, and our courage to face the unknown.

A society is defined by where it sets its gaze. To curtail NASA's scientific ambitions so dramatically is to look down and inward, abandoning the pursuit of knowledge and inspiration that has long characterized America at its best. This proposed budget cut is not merely a line item adjustment; it represents a potential dark age for American space science, sacrificing our cosmic inheritance for short-term expediency. The American story in space should not end this way.

We implore you to firmly reject this disastrous proposal for NASA's Science Mission Directorate in the FY 2026 budget. As part of a comprehensive investment in NASA, the science budget should be reinstated alongside a proportional increase in the agency's overall funding. We urge Congress to restore funding for NASA Science, revitalizing our capabilities instead of abandoning them. Doing so would ensure the continuation of our American story: the one that embraces challenge, tenacity, and the pursuit of the frontier.

Sincerely,

The Planetary Society
American Astronomical Society
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
Coalition for Deep Space Exploration
Commercial Space Federation
Explore Mars, Inc.
The Mars Society
Planetary Science Institute