

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 17, 2017

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington DC, 20510

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

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As you begin work on the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18), we urge you to support the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Office of Education.

2016 was a historic year for NASA's educational programs with the release of *Hidden Figures*, an Oscar-nominated film that tells the stories of three remarkable women who broke down barriers of gender and race at NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia. Thanks to Margot Lee Shetterly's book and the popularity of *Hidden Figures*, millions of American children learned about the exciting opportunities offered by science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines, including the opportunity to contribute to our nation's space program that leads the world in innovation and exploration. For young women and people of color - populations that are especially underrepresented in STEM fields - *Hidden Figures* represents a powerfully motivational story and effective recruiting tool.

Given the importance of STEM education and the success of *Hidden Figures*, which was recently celebrated by high-ranking members of the Trump Administration at a screening at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, we were disappointed by President Trump's budget proposal to eliminate funding for NASA's Office of Education in FY18.

NASA's Office of Education 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 (on average) from non-federal sources to maximize STEM engagement with students nationwide. According to NASA program data, nearly 90% of students who participate in Space Grant-funded activities move on to either a STEM job in industry, NASA, or academia, or they enroll in a STEM graduate program.

In addition, the NASA Office of Education supports the Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP), which provides financial assistance to the nation's Minority Serving Institutions through internships, scholarships, and fellowship grants and cooperative agreements. At a time when talent is desperately needed for STEM jobs across the country, we

should be enabling and encouraging minority students to pursue careers in STEM fields, not shuttering the programs that open pathways for underrepresented populations to the STEM pipeline.

Importantly, approximately \$25 million in NASA Office of Education funds provide direct financial assistance to thousands of students in all 50 states. In addition to direct aid, the Office of Education also invests in far-reaching enrichment activities that expose students to STEM fields. In 2015, nearly 633,000 elementary and secondary school students and 50,000 educators engaged in NASA-supported STEM education activities.

We recognize that you face significant budget constraints, but we urge you to support the NASA Office of Education because its mission is critical to boosting the nation's workforce competitiveness. For Fiscal Year 2016, Congress appropriated \$115 million for the NASA Office of Education. For Fiscal Year 2017, Congress appropriated \$100 million. This funding helps the nation make strides towards equipping students with the skills needed to enter the growing STEM workforce. Moreover, NASA Office of Education funding supports curriculum development for teachers, which will be critical as STEM disciplines evolve to keep pace with technological innovations and the changing demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

We are grateful for your past support for NASA's Office of Education and the programs that inspire students across the country to pursue NASA and STEM-related careers. We believe that the NASA Office of Education supports important STEM education programs for students at every level, from K-12 to community college and doctoral degree programs. As we learned through the stories of Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson in *Hidden Figures*, opening doors to STEM careers for young, talented people will ultimately enable the whole nation to reach new heights.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

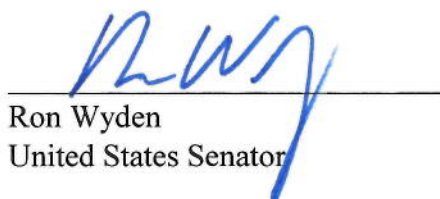
Sincerely,



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



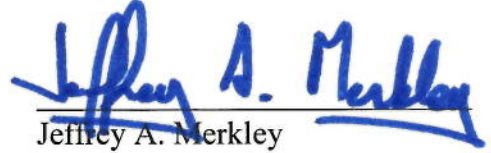
Al Franken  
United States Senator



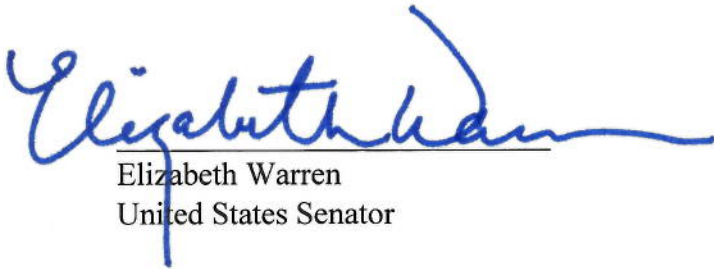
Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



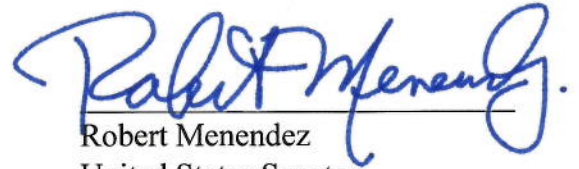
Jack Reed  
United States Senator



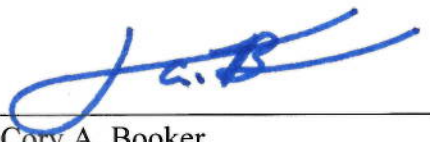
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



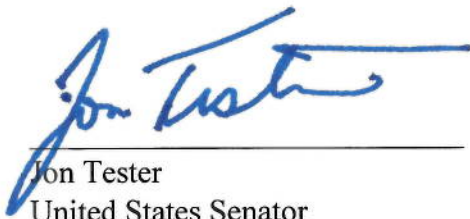
Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Jon Tester  
United States Senator



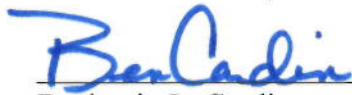
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



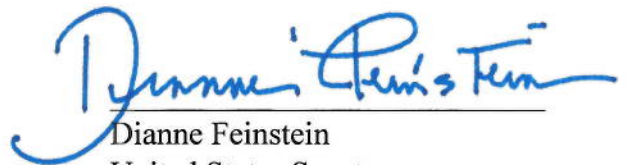
Tom Udall  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



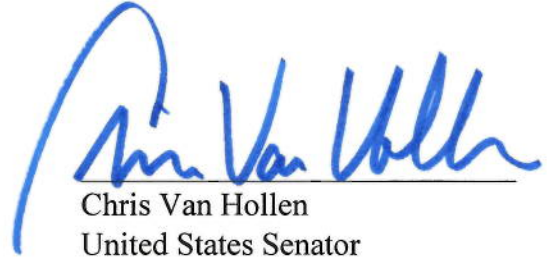
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



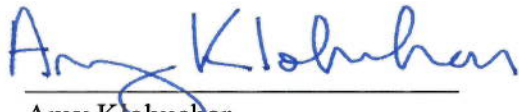
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



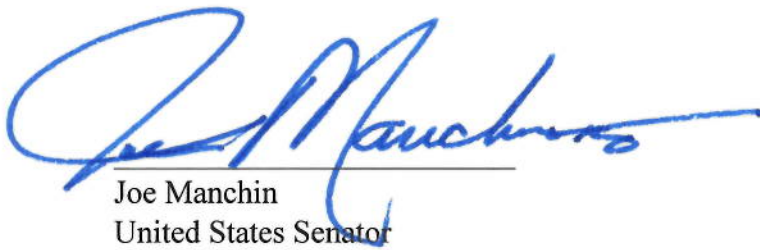
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



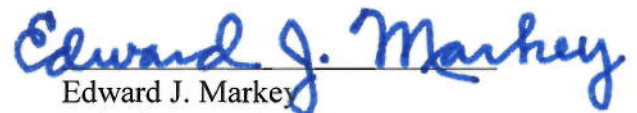
Joe Manchin  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



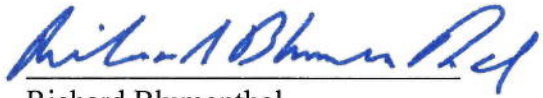
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Bill Nelson  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator