U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Opening Statement

Ranking Member Valerie Foushee (D-NC)
of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics

Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics Hearing:
Leveraging Commercial Innovation for Lunar Exploration:
A Review of NASA's CLPS Initiative

April 1st, 2025

Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding today's hearing on leveraging commercial innovation for lunar exploration. I want to welcome our distinguished witnesses and thank you for being here.

Frequent and affordable access to the Moon is crucial, if we are to answer fundamental scientific questions about our planet and the conditions as life emerged, and for understanding the composition and distribution of lunar volatiles, such as water ice, that will both deepen our understanding of the building blocks for life on Earth and serve as an invaluable resource to enable deep space human exploration.

Our ability to routinely deliver payloads to the Moon will also help us test technological capabilities and investigate environmental conditions, such as lunar dust, regolith, and radiation, so that we can prepare to operate safely on the lunar surface, prior to landing our Artemis astronauts.

There is value beyond measure in exploring the Moon, and the U.S. needs to be there. We know this. And we have been there before.

Just as the Apollo project stimulated entire new industries, inspired and attracted generations of world-leading scientists and engineers, and projected a global stature that others still seek to emulate today, I have no doubt that Artemis and initiatives such as CLPS can be as transformational.

CLPS is a new approach for accessing the Moon, and for doing so frequently and affordably through the purchase of commercial delivery services for science and technology payloads. Under CLPS, NASA steps back, accepts more risk, and gives commercial companies greater decision-making control.

In the last two years, the first four CLPS missions have launched, and three have landed on the lunar surface. With the first set of landings now under our belt, today's hearing is a timely opportunity to consider what we have learned thus far, and what is needed for CLPS to succeed going forward.

In 2024, NASA's Office of Inspector General reviewed the CLPS initiative and recommended, for example, that NASA develop performance goals and a management plan for CLPS, as well as recommending NASA assess its role in a commercial lunar delivery market where, today, NASA is by far the main customer. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how these issues are being addressed. In addition, as CLPS is funded and managed under NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD), I am also eager to learn about the scientific returns from CLPS to date, and the potential for CLPS to help advance lunar science priorities recommended in the most recent National Academies planetary science decadal survey.

There is much to be excited about with CLPS—for lunar science, technology, exploration, and for bolstering United States commercial capabilities—if we get it right.

However, there is a shadow clouding our lunar goals and ambitions—and it is not a lunar eclipse. When the Oval Office is wreaking havoc across the Federal government; ordering widescale RIFs, including at NASA; firing NASA professionals such as the NASA chief scientist and the NASA chief technologist; and threatening to slash NASA's science budget, one can only question whether the Trump Administration is committed to United States leadership in lunar science and exploration.

Or is the President content, instead, to let China establish a presence on the Moon, shape the rules of the road, make transformational discoveries, and hand over the keys to lunar exploration by allowing China to plant stakes in the lunar regolith and build the only base camp there? That would be a tragic mistake, and it would present grave consequences to our economic and national security.

I can assure you that as Ranking Member of this Subcommittee, I will continue to carry out rigorous oversight and work diligently with my colleagues on the Committee to ensure that NASA and its workforce remain strong, that we support a bright and bold future for lunar science and exploration—and across NASA's portfolio—and that we maintain and sustain United States leadership in space.

Thank you, and I yield back.