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

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

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

April 1st, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Haridopolos and Ranking Member Foushee for convening this hearing today.

I support the Commercial Lunar Payload Services—or CLPS—experiment. We authorized CLPS in the bipartisan NASA Reauthorization Act of 2024, which overwhelmingly passed the House last September.

I want to ensure that CLPS is set up with the best possible chance to succeed and achieve its objectives. That means both supporting a nascent commercial lunar delivery industry and managing CLPS strategically to meet well-defined, high-priority science and technology objectives.

We know that supporting CLPS means being willing to take more risks than a traditional NASA program. But we need to be sure we are taking smart, deliberate risks. In one case, NASA misjudged the risk of jumping to a large, complex delivery task order too early in the CLPS initiative. That cost time and money, and we have a rover still on the ground, not yet doing science on the Moon.

To that end, I am interested in hearing today both what NASA intends to do with the VIPER rover, and also how lessons from that experience are being applied to the CLPS initiative moving forward.

On a bipartisan basis, this Committee did send an inquiry to NASA. We've spent $450 million dollars on VIPER. It was complete when it was terminated. The problem was not with the payload, it was with the launch. I remain concerned about that whole process.

The science community recognizes the potential of CLPS to address high-priority science at the Moon, particularly once landing systems have proven to be reliable, and to be one component of an integrated planetary science program.

Of course, being able to do high-priority science and technology at the Moon means we need to continue to steward a robust science and technology enterprise to do it. And right now, our

world-leading science and technology enterprise is under assault. There is no other way to describe it.

NASA has managed to avoid the cruel absurdity of being forced to fire, then re-hire probationary employees. But NASA and the space community still have to contend with grants and contracts cancelled or in limbo; the abrupt closure of offices and firing of senior science and technology experts, and threats of devastating cuts to the Science budget, widespread layoffs, and closure of facilities.

The Trump Administration is also dismantling anything and everything that promotes broad access to and participation in the scientific enterprise by all Americans. The planetary science community chose to open its most recent decadal survey—a community consensus document highly-regarded by Congress and this Committee—by pointing out that issues of diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility are central to the success of the planetary science enterprise. And now NASA can't even follow the survey's related recommendations.

All in all, it is an international embarrassment.

As I said at our first Space & Aeronautics hearing about a month ago: I'm excited about NASA's Artemis campaign. I support our Moon to Mars program, and I want the United States to succeed in reestablishing a lunar program in preparation for the even more ambitious goal of being the first nation to step foot on Mars. Congress has been clear and committed to this objective—though we need to continue to back that commitment up with the appropriate resources. The research and commercial communities also appear to be committed to this objective. The question is: when will this Administration get with the program? And how much lasting damage will they inflict before they do?

Thank you, and I yield back.