



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Haley Stevens (D-MI)
of the Subcommittee on Research and Technology

Joint Hearing of
Space & Aeronautics and Research & Technology Subcommittees:
A Review of the Decadal Survey for Astronomy and Astrophysics in the 2020s

December 1, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Beyer. It's an honor to be cochairing this hearing with you. Good morning and thank you to our distinguished panel for joining us today.

This hearing will be an important review of our goals for the coming decade, which have enormous potential in the astronomy and astrophysics fields.

In May 2019, the full Committee held a hearing to celebrate the first ever image of a black hole made by the NSF funded Event Horizon Telescope. I had the privilege of meeting with members of the team that captured the image prior to the hearing, and the enthusiasm of the scientists was truly infectious.

Breakthroughs like the Event Horizon image can play an immeasurable role in inspiring students to pursue STEM studies. We can't help but be enthralled by the stunning images in astronomy and the implications for how we understand our place in the universe. I came away inspired and reenergized about this Committee's role in advancing U.S. science and engineering.

In that same discussion, we touched on a range of issues facing the astronomy community.

We heard about the importance of investing in research infrastructure, from large scale telescopes to smaller scale instrumentation, and in people and partnerships. A breakthrough discovery like that would not have been possible without international collaboration and the talent of early-career researchers.

We also discussed the challenges related to the management of big data and the critical importance of investing in theory and simulations.

As the Chair of the Research and Technology Subcommittee, I have a particular interest in the recommendations for the National Science Foundation and the ground-based facilities that are needed for astronomers to address priority science questions.

We have tremendous scientific opportunities before us, and I believe you have charted a bold yet sustainable path for achieving them.

I also appreciate the strong focus on programmatic balance woven throughout the report. It makes no sense to invest billions of dollars in research facilities if we don't also invest in the students and researchers who can turn those capabilities into new knowledge.

Another important focus of today's discussion will be understanding the needs of the astronomy community. I was pleased to see a particular focus in this report on the future of the astronomy workforce, with an emphasis on addressing barriers to diversity and inclusion. Under the leadership of Chairwoman Johnson and Ranking Member Lucas, STEM diversity has been a cornerstone issue for this Committee.

I am eager to learn more about the vision the community has set for itself over the next decade and to understand what Congress can do to help realize it. You have done your part, now it's on Congress and the funding agencies to make it happen.

Thank you, I yield back.