STATEMENT OF
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON SPACE

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"NASA INFRASTRUCTURE: ENABLING DISCOVERY AND ENSURING CAPABILITY"

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding today's hearing to review NASA's infrastructure and facilities, and I would like to welcome our witnesses.

Before I start, allow me to congratulate NASA, the Ames Research Center, the Wallops Launch Facility, agency employees, contractors, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport, and Orbital Sciences in particular, for two outstanding space launches in the past two weeks. I am hopeful that LADEE will give us further insight into the Moon's environment and that Orbital's docking of its Cygnus spacecraft to the International Space Station signals the start of routine cargo resupply to that orbital laboratory.

NASA, like other government agencies, built a range of facilities during its early years to meet national objectives. In NASA's case, those objectives included sending probes to investigate the Earth-space environment and study near and distant planets, advancing aeronautics, and sending humans to the surface of the Moon and returning them home safely. The Space Shuttle, during its thirty years of operations, required its own considerable infrastructure.

These facilities, and many others at NASA, have enabled the United States to achieve the remarkable discoveries and advances over the last 50 years that have inspired generations of Americans.

The problem, as we know, is that the assets that enabled the past, are now, to an extent, a burden on the future. Nearly 80 percent of NASA's facilities are more than 40 years old. In addition, NASA is carrying a deferred maintenance backlog assessed at more than $2 billion.

It is hard to expect NASA to perform as a 21st century space agency with 20th century facilities. In fact, a 2010 National Academies report, *Capabilities for the Future: An Assessment of NASA Laboratories for Basic Research*, found that:

"Over the past 5 years or more there has been a steady and significant decrease in NASA's laboratory capabilities, including equipment, maintenance, and facility upgrades.…The fundamental research community at NASA has been severely impacted by the budget reductions that are responsible for this decrease in laboratory capabilities, and as a result NASA's ability to support even NASA's future goals is in serious jeopardy."

And yet, research laboratories are just one facet of the problem. There are test stands, wind tunnels, arc jets, thermal vacuum chambers, launch complexes, and Shuttle processing facilities that are underutilized or that may no longer have a defined NASA need.

NASA Authorization Acts of 2005, 2008, and 2010 have provided direction to NASA to address its infrastructure challenges, and multiple reports of the NASA Inspector General, among other advisory bodies, have highlighted NASA's infrastructure challenges.

To its credit, NASA has, and is, taking positive steps to facilitate prudent, strategic decisions on maintenance, consolidation, demolition, and renewal of facilities, including the development of an Agency Facilities Strategy and an integrated agency-wide Real Property Master Plan.

But let's face it, NASA's facility and infrastructure challenges are a bit of a Catch-22. NASA needs clear direction on its future, especially in human spaceflight and exploration, to help the agency leverage and optimize its infrastructure decisions and investments.

And the underutilization of assets, along with the poor state of NASA's research labs, is in part a result of not giving NASA the resources it needs to implement the missions the nation is asking it to carry out.

So, we have a choice: ignore the problem and let NASA's facilities run themselves into the ground to the point at which NASA is limping into mediocrity.

Or invest in NASA and enable its future as a 21st century space agency that will continue its remarkable successes while fostering our national innovation agenda, the passions and dreams of our people, and new discoveries and advances in science, aeronautics, human spaceflight and exploration.

I submit that this is not the time to back away from NASA. Rather, this is the time to provide NASA with the tools it needs to become a productive 21st century space agency.

That's why I included in my alternative NASA Authorization Act of 2013 bill, H.R. 2616, provisions to both focus NASA on an exploration goal and to help address NASA's aging facilities.

I know there are a lot of issues to discuss and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on today's topic, for which I believe the hearing title couldn't be more apt—"NASA INFRASTRUCTURE: ENABLING DISCOVERY AND ENSURING CAPABILITY".

Thank you, and I yield back.