

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

2321 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301

(202) 225-6371  
<http://science.house.gov>

February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Howard Lutnick  
Secretary  
Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

I write to you as the Ranking Member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. As the Secretary of Commerce, your position requires you to lead the Commerce Department with character, integrity, and candor. But you lied to the American people about your relationship with Jeffrey Epstein. I cannot accept that critical science and competitiveness agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) are currently led by an individual who is mentioned in the Department of Justice's Epstein Library 223 times, particularly given your vehement – and dishonest – denials of association with Jeffrey Epstein before those files came to light. The Department of Commerce deserves a Secretary who can lead without the stain of a past relationship with this era's most notorious child sex trafficker. You owe it to the American people to resign immediately.

I have personally reviewed some of the unredacted Epstein files. They are filled with depravity and criminality. So I understand why you sought to distance yourself from Epstein before the files were released. You stated unequivocally in October 2025 that you were “never in the room with him socially, for business or even philanthropy,” following a 2005 visit when you were allegedly disgusted by what you saw in his apartment. When the New York Times asked you for comment for a February 7, 2026, article, you stated that you “spent zero time with him.”<sup>1</sup>

As has been widely reported, this could not be further from the truth. In May 2011, you met him for drinks;<sup>2</sup> in May 2013, you appear to have met with him again;<sup>3</sup> and as has been widely

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Rothfeld, “Files Detail Epstein’s Dealings With Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick,” *The New York Times*, February 7, 2026, accessed here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/07/nyregion/lutnick-epstein-files-dealings.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Calendar event, May 1, 2011, “Drinks w/ Howard Lutnick,” accessed here: <https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%2010/EFTA02189429.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Email from Jeffrey Epstein to David Mitchell, May 4, 2013, accessed here: <https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%2010/EFTA01972630.pdf>.

reported, you took your 188-foot yacht<sup>4</sup> to his private Caribbean island in December 2012 to meet him for lunch.<sup>5</sup> In a February 10, 2026, hearing before a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, you emphasized the presence of your wife, children, and nannies at this lunch, and implied it was absurd to “suggest that there was anything untoward about that in 2012.”<sup>6</sup> I should not have to remind you that in 2012, Jeffrey Epstein was just over three years out of prison, where he had served a thirteen-month sentence for soliciting prostitution from a minor.<sup>7</sup> Bringing children and nannies to the private island of a known pedophile and sex trafficker is, itself, “untoward,” whether or not any illicit activity occurred at the lunch in question.

Furthermore, within ten months of this lunch, an Epstein associate sent Jeffrey Epstein your nanny’s resume and stated he was trying to arrange a time for Epstein to meet with her.<sup>8</sup> I would note that Jeffrey Epstein did not have children. To be clear, there are not enough documents currently released to draw conclusions about this connection. But the fact that this open question lingers around a sitting Cabinet Secretary is upsetting, and frankly, creepy. And the fact that you lied about the lunch itself until you were forced to acknowledge it in front of Congress makes it abundantly clear that the public cannot trust your continued denials on this issue. You have demonstrated that you will lie about Jeffrey Epstein for as long as you think you can get away with it.

This is not the first time I have called your judgment into question. Since you assumed your position, you have been a disastrous leader for the Department of Commerce. You have broken core NOAA functions and fired people who are integral to keeping Americans safe during extreme weather events<sup>9</sup> and to running programs that directly contribute to our national security.<sup>10</sup> You have turned the CHIPS program from one focused on strengthening our economic and national security, to a corrupt slush fund for national equity investment (i.e. socialism). While the fact of your association with Jeffrey Epstein is disturbing, and your lies are unacceptable, I am not surprised to see yet another instance of your poor judgment and arrogance. It has become abundantly clear that you are unfit to lead the Department of Commerce and the critical science and competitiveness functions it oversees. You have proven that you are unwilling to be forthcoming and honest about your association with a known sex trafficker. The American people deserve better. I demand that you resign immediately.

---

<sup>4</sup> Emails between Allison Lutnick and Epstein employee Lesley Groff, December 23, 2012, accessed here: <https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%209/EFTA00398736.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Email from Howard Lutnick to Jeffrey Epstein, December 24, 2012, accessed here: <https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%2010/EFTA02152981.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> “WATCH: Lutnick downplays relationship with Epstein during Senate testimony,” PBS NewsHour, February 10, 2026, accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUrpVQ5b3Eo>.

<sup>7</sup> “A timeline of the Jeffrey Epstein investigation and the fight to make the government’s files public,” *PBS News*, February 6, 2026, accessed here: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/a-timeline-of-the-jeffrey-epstein-investigation-and-the-fight-to-make-the-governments-files-public>.

<sup>8</sup> Email from Jeffrey Epstein to Richard Kahn, October 3, 2013, accessed here: <https://www.justice.gov/epstein/files/DataSet%2010/EFTA01954703.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Ranking Members Zoe Lofgren and Gabe Amo to Secretary Howard Lutnick, July 9, 2025, accessed here: <https://democrats-science.house.gov/imo/media/doc/SST%20RM%20Lofgren%20Amo%20-%20Letter%20to%20Secretary%20Lutnick%20-%20NWS%20Staff%20Shortages%20-%20207.9.251.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> “Committee Leaders Demand Reversal of NOAA Space Commerce Office Firings,” Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Democrats, March 26, 2025, accessed here: <https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/committee-leaders-demand-reversal-of-noaa-space-commerce-office-firings>.

Pursuant to Rule X of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology “shall review and study on a continuing basis laws, programs, and Government activities relating to nonmilitary research and development.”<sup>11</sup> The Committee possesses jurisdiction over “environmental research and development, marine research . . . outer space, including exploration and control thereof,” the National Weather Service, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.<sup>12</sup>

Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

CC: Brian Babin  
Chairman  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

---

<sup>11</sup> [119 First Session House Rules](#).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*