

**Opening Statement**  
**Ranking Member Daniel Lipinski**  
Subcommittee on Research  
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Joint Hearing with Space Subcommittee on:  
*Exoplanet Discoveries: Have We Found Other Earths?*

May 9, 2013

Thank you Chairmen Palazzo and Bucshon for holding this hearing and thank you to the witnesses for being here. I will keep this brief.

The search for habitable planets outside of our own solar system was identified as a scientific priority in the 2010 National Academies Decadal Survey of Astronomy and Astrophysics. And no wonder. This is exactly the type of scientific pursuit that expands our understanding of the world, or worlds, around us and grips the imagination of scientists and the public at large, even though we have no idea what we will find.

Exoplanet research is also a good example of an area of science that receives support from more than one federal agency. In this case, NASA and NSF have overlapping science goals, but very different tools with which to pursue those goals. As a result, the data and findings generated by NASA's space-based instruments may map directly onto data and findings generated by NSF's ground-based instruments, permitting the kind of replication that drives scientific discovery forward. I could also note that the recent paper describing the new exoplanet that was found in a so-called habitable zone was co-authored by a researcher being funded by an NSF CAREER award, which funds early career researchers. I look forward to hearing more about the scientific opportunities made possible by current and future instruments at both agencies.

The collaboration between NSF and NASA on astronomy and astrophysics research appears overall to be strong and productive. The Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee, which was established by Congress in the 2002 NSF Reauthorization Act to address structural problems in interagency collaboration that were a real concern 10 years ago, have been very positive in their assessments in more recent years.

At the same time, both NASA and NSF have been under budgetary constraints that have hampered progress in astronomy and many other fields of science, even as the quantity and quality of proposals continues to increase. I'd like to hear from the agency representatives how you are dealing with these funding challenges for exoplanet research specifically and astronomy more generally, and any other challenges you may be facing.