

OPENING STATEMENT

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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

The International Space Station: Addressing Operational Challenges
Space Subcommittee Hearing

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on the International Space Station. This is an important topic, and I look forward to the testimony of our panel of witnesses.

It is no secret that I have long been a supporter of the ISS. It plays a unique role in furthering research, advancing human spaceflight, and inspiring our young people. Moreover, in addition to being an incredible engineering achievement, it provides a very visible demonstration of the benefits that can be derived from peaceful international cooperation in space.

Failures of commercial cargo transportation missions to the ISS remind us that spaceflight is not easy. Failures will occur, and unfortunately those failures will have impacts on the ISS program. We need to better understand those impacts, as well as the plans for dealing with them going forward. And we need to know whether there are any “lessons learned” that need to be applied to the far more challenging commercial *crew* transportation program.

I have said before that the ISS is a perishable commodity. We need to be clear on what NASA needs to accomplish with this unique laboratory while it is still operational. While the Administration has proposed to extend ISS operations until 2024, maintaining the ISS involves risks and a significant opportunity cost. We need to ensure that the ISS is being used in a way that maximizes its productivity and value to the nation.

In addition, if we are to ensure that the needed ISS research and technology activities are carried out, it is clear that we are going to need to make the necessary investments.

Stagnant ISS research budgets do not communicate the message that we are serious about supporting the important research and technology efforts that can only be accomplished on the ISS. That is a problem that Congress can and should fix.

Well, Mr. Chairman, we have a lot of issues to discuss today. I welcome our witnesses and look forward to a productive hearing.

Thank you, and I yield back.