



UNIVERSITIES SPACE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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June 10, 2013

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The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
and
The Honorable Richard Shelby
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Frank Wolf
and
The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

Dear Senator Mikulski, Senator Shelby, Representative Wolf, and
Representative Fattah:

I am writing to convey our very strong support for NASA's successful STEM education programs, which are in jeopardy under the proposed federal STEM education reorganization.

NASA's education activities are built into its science, aeronautics, and human exploration missions. They are a part of the missions, directly leveraging the mission research activities, and cannot be separated. SOFIA, NASA's airborne infrared observatory, is one example among many. SOFIA's Airborne Astronomy Ambassadors program was developed directly alongside the SOFIA research program. In refitting the airplane for this observatory, NASA built a console for exclusive use of these Ambassadors. Within this extensive professional development program, during SOFIA's expected 20-year lifetime more than 1500 classroom teachers and science educators will work along-side scientists using SOFIA for their research. Using their SOFIA experience and training, these teachers will reach out to hundreds of thousands of teachers, students, and members of the general public. However, under the proposed STEM reorganization, the SOFIA education program is slated for elimination, and it is not clear how the Department of Education would carry out a program such as this with the same effectiveness and efficiency.

NASA scientists and engineers work closely with NASA educators to develop and carry out its STEM education programs. A majority of science missions each have more than ten research scientists who contribute a portion of their time to the education program. They give presentations, write articles, provide science content, and participate in podcasts and videos. They are role models for our students considering STEM careers. This coupling of science and education infuses NASA's education activities with current exciting research and technology. The scientists and engineers are invested in the program, giving audiences a personal look into the people of NASA who carry out these inspiring missions. The men and women of NASA are the best people to educate and inform the public about the science of NASA's missions.

NASA education programs directly connect with students, educators, and adults in classrooms, in museums, at after-school activities, and in local communities, across the country. These programs are peer reviewed, extensively evaluated, and proven effective. NASA partners with schools districts, museums, universities, non-profit organizations, and businesses, to serve the widest of audiences, including underserved populations ranging from inner-city teenagers to rural Native Americans. The Space Telescope Science Institute, alone, partners with 500 such organizations to carry out its successful HST education program. The Science Education and Public Outreach Forums of NASA's Science Mission Directorate develop highly-leveraged, nation-wide programs. For example, as part of Women's History Month in 2013, two thousand girls and their families in nineteen states participated in hands-on activities during the Forum's NASAScience4Girls, which was made possible through the partnering of twenty-seven NASA science-mission education programs with local libraries. Rather than being redundant, these programs and partnerships allow NASA to meet the unique needs of these communities.

NASA's STEM education and outreach touches nearly every American, affecting career choices of students, increasing public understanding of science, and instilling national pride in the U.S. space program. On behalf of our 105 member universities, I thank you for your leadership. I urge you and your colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, and in both houses of Congress, to join together to keep NASA's proven education programs, for future generations.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred A. Tarantino', written in a cursive style.

Frederick A. Tarantino
President and CEO

cc: Gen. Charles F. Bolden (Ret.)
Administrator,
National Aeronautics and Space Administration



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Tufts University
Utah State University
Vanderbilt University
University of Virginia
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
University of Washington
Washington University in St. Louis
University of Wisconsin—Madison
Yale University

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller IV
and
The Honorable John Thune
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate

The Honorable Lamar Smith
and
The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
United States House of Representatives

Dear Senator Rockefeller, Senator Thune, Representative Smith, and Representative Johnson:

I am writing to convey our very strong support for NASA’s successful STEM education programs, which are in jeopardy under the proposed federal STEM education reorganization.

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