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# United States Senate

COMMITTEES

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ENVIRONMENT AND  
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November 19, 2018

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Chairman  
Commerce, Justice, Science and  
Related Agencies Subcommittee  
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Commerce, Justice, Science and  
Related Agencies Subcommittee  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Shaheen,

As the Subcommittee works on conferencing the FY19 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill with your counterparts in the House of Representatives, I am hopeful that the Subcommittee will continue its strong support of NASA's space science and astronomy programs. As discussed in our meeting on September 26, 2018 with NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine, Independent Review Board (IRB) Chairman Thomas Young, and Wes Bush, CEO of Northrup Grumman, continued support from Committee Leadership will be necessary to move the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) across the finish line.

As you know, the development and construction of the JWST has not always been a smooth road. I deeply appreciate the Subcommittee's leadership throughout that process, including the critical oversight and efforts that have been necessary to bring the project back on track. I share your concerns about the issues, including project and human errors that have delayed its completion. But I continue to believe it is too important to abandon. It will have the capacity to study the history of our universe and provide a deeper view of space than we have ever seen.

While it is not necessary to increase funding for JWST's development beyond the President's requested level in FY19, we will face challenges before the project launch date in 2021, including the need for funding above the current cost cap in fiscal years 2020 and 2021. I look forward to working with you to balance the needs of JWST with other critical NASA missions.

I am specifically concerned about the possible impact on the Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST), which the Subcommittee has also strongly supported. As you know, the overall cost of WFIRST is highly dependent on the phasing of the project, so to minimize costs, the project's current funding profile must be maintained so that technical risk can be resolved on long-lead items and major contracts executed to begin work on the bus and other major components.

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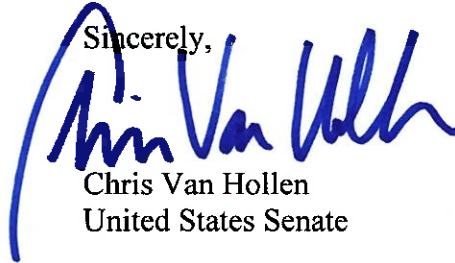
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In addition to these concerns, the astrophysics research community is now starting up the deliberative process to develop the 2020 Astronomy and Astrophysics Decadal Survey. Addressing the JWST cost cap issue now would settle a major variable ahead of that Decadal, which would greatly assist the community in understanding how to prioritize and recommend instruments and missions that will follow the launches of JWST and WFIRST in the next 3 to 7 years.

I am very appreciative of the Subcommittee's long history of support for JWST and its recommendation to fund WFIRST at a level of \$352 million in FY2019. I am eager to work with you to tackle the need to increase the JWST development cost cap to \$8.803 billion in your negotiations over the final FY2019 Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill, due to its importance to the astrophysics research community and potential to interfere with the continued development of critical missions like WFIRST. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Van Hollen". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large initial "C" and "V".

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senate