

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 20, 2018

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

The International Space Station (ISS) is the largest and most complex habitable space-based research facility ever constructed by humanity. It's a marvel of engineering, and critically important to our nation's space program. For over 17 years, the ISS has provided the United States with continuous access to low Earth orbit, which has been paramount to the success of NASA, our commercial partners, scientific research, and human space exploration.

That's why it is concerning that the President's FY 2019 Budget Request for NASA proposes "to end direct U.S. Government funding for the space station [ISS] by 2025 and provides \$150 million to begin a program that would encourage commercial development of capabilities that NASA can use in its place." While we have been strong proponents of the U.S. commercial space sector, prematurely ending direct U.S. Government funding of ISS could have disastrous consequences. The future of ISS should be determined by the emergence of a viable and proven commercial alternative and the needs of our national space program.

It's for this very reason that Congress enacted the bipartisan NASA Transition Authorization Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-10) which sought to provide both NASA and ISS with mission security and stability. As you know, P.L. 115-10 requires NASA, ISS partners, the scientific user community, and the commercial space sector to "develop a plan to transition in a step-wise approach from the current regime that relies heavily on NASA sponsorship to a regime where NASA could be one of many customers of a low-Earth orbit non-governmental human space flight enterprise."

In fact, Congress specifically required that the transition plan include cost estimates for extending operations of the ISS to 2024, 2028, and 2030, and an evaluation of the feasible and preferred service life of the ISS through at least 2028 as a unique scientific, commercial, and space exploration related facility. *P.L. 115-10 specifically required the NASA Administrator to deliver a report to Congress not later than December 1, 2017. As of today, that report has not been delivered to Congress as required by federal statute.*

In order to gain a better understanding of the administration's handling of this important issue, we are sending a separate letter to NASA requesting that the agency immediately engage in document preservation efforts as it pertains to the ISS transition report as described in P.L. 115-

10. We are also asking NASA to provide information in response to a series of questions that should be provided as soon as possible, but **no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 27, 2018.**

We appreciate your cooperation in this important matter and look forward to your response. It is our expectation that the Office of Management and Budget will work with NASA in facilitating the delivery of all of the information that has been requested. Failure to comply with this request will require additional action. Please contact our staff if there are questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,



Ted Cruz
Chairman
Subcommittee on Space, Science,
and Competitiveness



Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation

Cc: Robert Lightfoot, Acting Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Dr. Scott Pace, Executive Secretary, National Space Council