

Statement of
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before the

Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce
Committee on Oversight and Accountability
U.S. House of Representatives

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Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today about NASA’s telework practices and policies. I am pleased to discuss NASA’s longstanding telework and remote work policies and practices and how they enable mission success at NASA.

Since 2014, NASA has supported various types of telework for Agency civil servant employees based on telework agreements that each employee establishes with their supervisors.¹ Before the pandemic, it was not unusual for employees to telework one or two days a week or for employees to have their laptops at home in anticipation of weather required ad hoc telework days. With only minor changes, NASA’s telework and remote policies remain the same today as they were in 2014.

In March 2020, NASA was able to quickly move its workforce to mandatory telework status by utilizing long-standing telework practices and by capitalizing on previous strategic investments in our information technology infrastructure. Thus, NASA was never “closed,” during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, our employees continued to execute diverse and challenging missions from on-site

¹ NASA’s first telework policy was issued in 2010. Prior to that, NASA had allowed teleworking in special, limited circumstances such as for an employee who had a health issue.

and remote locations. They launched spacecraft and landed another rover on Mars; they launched the next-generation space telescope and observatory; they continued developing our next-generation human spaceflight system; and they advanced new technologies in science and aeronautics. They interacted virtually with students around the globe; participated in jobs fairs and small business events; and they continued to hire and onboard employees while also creating special remote opportunities for summer interns. Most importantly, NASA continued to inspire the American public with our missions and our spirit of ingenuity and perseverance.

Within our teleworking practices and policies, NASA leadership has empowered Agency organizations and supervisors to determine the appropriate workplace flexibilities to accomplish their individual missions efficiently and effectively within the boundaries of Federal law, regulation, Office of Personnel Management guidance, and NASA policy. Currently about 98 percent of NASA civil servants are telework ready.²

We believe that workforce flexibilities such as telework and remote work³ provide a tremendous opportunity for NASA to remain competitive in the modern job market. For example, our highly-skilled, sought-after technical workforce is increasingly asking for and benefiting from new collaborative tools that enable them to more seamlessly work together to accomplish their missions, regardless of their work locations. A hybrid environment also increases talent-sharing among our nine geographically dispersed NASA Centers and maximizes cross-Center career opportunities without

² This figure does not include remote workers which have a remote agreement with NASA, not a telework agreement.

³ “Telework” and “remote work” are equivalent to the definitions used by the Office of Personnel Management.

employees having to physically move. Having a telework-ready workforce helps maintain a continuity of operations during an emergency.

To help supervisors support teleworking and remote employees, NASA has developed a variety of resources, expanded available training, and hosted virtual supervisor sessions. Supervisors are advised to consider the Agency's core values (safety, integrity, teamwork, excellence, and inclusion) when making decisions about how the telework program could impact their teams. If employee performance issues exist with any employee – no matter where they work – managers are expected to utilize performance tools and counseling to address those issues as they arise.

NASA's future work environment plans are not written in stone. NASA recognizes that we may need periodic course adjustments as we get used to this new era of a hybrid work environment. Therefore, NASA's senior leaders remain committed to developing new ways to measure and evaluate Agency performance in concert with our new hybrid workforce environment.

While NASA's mission must always come first, those missions cannot happen without our amazing and dedicated workforce. During the pandemic, our employees – both civil servants and contractors – accomplished amazing feats while working in a mostly off-site manner, and often while overcoming great personal challenges. Their passion and precision is why NASA earned its 11th consecutive award as the Best Place to Work in the Federal Government for large agencies in 2023.

We look forward to discussing this important matter with your Committee and other stakeholders in Congress. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have today.