OPENING STATEMENT

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of the Subcommittee on Space

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
"Planetary Flagship Missions: Mars Rover 2020 and Europa Clipper"
July 18, 2017

Good morning and welcome to our distinguished panel of witnesses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on "*Planetary Flagship Missions: Mars Rover 2020 and Europa Clipper.*"

The longstanding partnership between NASA and the scientific community has been enormously fruitful both for scientific advancement and pushing the frontiers of space exploration. We live in a time when humans have sent spacecraft to explore the Moon, all eight planets, Pluto, and several asteroids and comets. Just last week, the NASA Juno spacecraft provided us an amazing view of Jupiter's mysterious Great Red Spot. And with the Voyager One probe now traveling through interstellar space, the reach of our scientific exploration is truly inspiring.

To maximize the scientific return-on-investment for planetary exploration, NASA develops both large and small missions to visit a range of destinations throughout our solar system. Large flagship missions, like the Mars 2020 and Europa Clipper missions, play an important role in using a suite of complex instruments to help us understand the challenges of exploring hard-to-reach locations. Smaller missions, like the Psyche mission represented on our panel, are launched more frequently in response to new discoveries. These missions also provide opportunities for students to engage in mission design, development, and operation. The intentional mix of mission sizes and destinations has provided significant value throughout the history of NASA's planetary science program.

NASA's planetary missions have greatly advanced our understanding of the solar system, and its potential to harbor life beyond Earth. These missions also provide invaluable opportunities to inspire and train the next generation of scientists and engineers. I look forward to learning more about the role of large and small planetary missions, and the importance of supporting a balance of mission sizes. I also want to acknowledge that planetary missions would not be possible without the long-term commitments to fund critical investments in research and technology development. The decisions made by previous Congresses now enable the exciting future planetary missions represented on our panel today. It is critical that we make investments that ensure future planetary missions have long-lead technology capabilities and that we remain the world leader in planetary science and exploration.

Today is an important opportunity to hear the latest in planetary missions and to examine the status of missions under development. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how NASA can best maintain a balance of mission sizes and destinations, as well as how the Committee can best support research and development.

Thank you and I yield back.