U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Opening Statement

Ranking Member Eric Sorensen (D-IL)
of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing:
"Advancing Scientific Discovery: Assessing the Status of NASA's Science Mission Directorate"

March 21, 2024

Good morning.

I join the Chairman in welcoming everyone to today's hearing, "*Advancing Scientific Discovery: Assessing the Status of NASAs Science Mission Directorate."* We also thank our exceptional panel of witnesses for being here today to share their expertise.

Thanks to the Science Mission Directorate, NASA is conducting reconnaissance of every planet in our solar system, studying the Sun and near-Earth environment, better understanding Earth systems, and probing the evolution of stars, galaxies, and the early Universe.
As a scientist and the only meteorologist in Congress, I'm eager to highlight the importance of NASA's work to our nation and to my constituents in Illinois' 17th District.

Take, for example, the study of Earth science, a field in which NASA's first-of-its-kind Earth observation investigations are helping improve something near and dear to my heart - our nation's operational weather services. These services inform the study of trends in flooding, droughts, and land use. This data can then be used by farmers in Central and Northwestern Illinois and around the country.

Speaking of NASA's scientific study of the Sun, communities around the country will soon have an opportunity to learn first-hand about our closest star. On April 8th, a total solar eclipse-where the Moon passes between the Sun and the Earth, turning day into night for a few short minutes-will be visible in several states, including the southern portion of Illinois, while most of the rest of the country, including communities in central and western Illinois will witness a partial eclipse.

I urge everyone to take advantage of this exciting educational moment and find a community or State event across the U.S. to join and experience a total solar eclipse.

The opportunities for pursuing important science, are vast. However, our fiscal resources are not. The Science Mission Directorate has many projects ongoing but does not have unlimited funds.

That poses a problem, because we need balance between and among the projects under the Science Mission Directorate to maintain a healthy distribution of funds to small, medium, and large missions. Large, high-priority missions with significant resource demands have the potential to upset the balance within and across NASA's science programs.

Today's hearing provides an important opportunity to examine the nature of this balance, and how we can pursue ambitious and large missions while maintaining the overall health of the Science Mission Directorate portfolio. I am eager to find solutions, because leaving high-priority science on the chopping block is not the future I want for the next generation and for our country.

I am proud and excited about what the future holds for NASA's science programs. Answers to so many important, challenging, and inspiring questions await us

I look forward to working with the Chairman, NASA, and - the Administration, as well as stakeholders, to ensure a bright and bold future for the space and earth science programs undertaken by NASA.

Thank you, and I yield back.