Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 12, 2026

The Honorable Jared Isaacman
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Administrator Isaacman and Members of the Space Academy Selection Commission,

As members of the Maryland Congressional Delegation, we write in strong support our state's application to become the home for the United States Space Academy. Maryland is the country's leader in space science. Marylanders train and become astronauts. We invent, create, manufacture, and develop the technology and spacecraft that allow humanity to go and see further into the universe. The talented and experienced workforce of space scientists, engineers, manufacturers, academics, educators, technicians, technologists, pilots, astronauts, and the pipeline of apprentices, early career researchers, interns, and students bring space exploration and research to life. The deeply-rooted civilian and military institutions provide a foundation for America's advancement in space. Our robust industry of large, medium, and small businesses tie the essential private and public partnerships that power economic development and adoption of cutting-edge technology together. After full consideration of all that our state has to offer, we believe it will be clear that Maryland is the natural host for this new institution that will foster the next generation of American space leadership.

Our state employs some of the nation's top space leaders needed to develop the next generation. NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, the first space flight center established by the agency, is home to the country's largest organization of scientists, engineers, and technologists building spacecraft and technology for space science. Goddard also hosts critical spacecraft test facilities, manages the communications systems that astronauts use aboard the International Space Station, and develops critical software for GPS capabilities. NASA's Wallops Flight Facility is located just across the border on Virginia's Eastern Shore and serves as a critical spaceport and test range for the region. NASA Headquarters, located a short drive from Goddard in Washington, D.C., houses the agency's leadership and administrative staff. These NASA facilities would be integral to the new institution: the University of Maryland is set to be the academic lead for the Academy with the permanent site at Goddard. The University of Maryland Eastern Shore is proposing to support a summer rotational program at Wallops. In all, Maryland is situated in an ideal location where Space Academy students could gain personalized, in-person experience with the professionals that lead all aspects of NASA's core focus areas.

Maryland also hosts an unrivaled community of research and operations centers that would provide unique opportunities for experiential learning. The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel has extensive experience in designing and operating missions for national security, science, and defense. The Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) in Baltimore is a facility unlike any other in the world, acting as the science mission center for the Hubble Space Telescope, the James Webb Space Telescope, and the recently launched Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope. Together, these facilities provide an opportunity for Academy students to gain a holistic understanding of space missions throughout their life cycle, from preliminary analysis to operations.

Maryland also boasts a world-class network of academic institutions that the Space Academy could draw from. University of Maryland College Park is a top public university renowned for physics, astronomy, and engineering programs and is positioned to provide support to the future Space Academy. University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) conducts world-leading space research and is in the nation's top ten university recipients of NASA research funding. Johns Hopkins University, which hosts STScI on its Baltimore campus, leads prominent astrophysics and planetary science research. The U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, one of the nation's premier officer schools, provides graduates world-class STEM talent in every class and contributes to Maryland's deep-rooted history in national defense. The University of Maryland Eastern Shore not only educates students in aerospace engineering, but their location also provides ideal proximity to Wallops Flight Facility. As the third largest Historically Black College and University in the country, Morgan State University has been expanding their STEM research portfolio substantially and is on track to become an R1 institution by 2030.

Maryland students routinely collaborate with NASA due to their proximity to Goddard and Wallops, and Space Academy students could have access to the same advantages. The ties between NASA and local universities are further strengthened by the Joint Space-Science Institute, a research partnership between UMD's Physics and Astronomy departments and NASA, as well as the Center for Research and Exploration in Space Science and Technology II (CRESST II), a collaboration between NASA and UMD, UMBC, Catholic University of America, Howard University, and Southeastern Universities Research Association. The Space Academy would gain the benefit of these successful partnerships to deliver a comprehensive, world-class education unavailable anywhere else.

Maryland is a premier hub for the aerospace industry. More than 100,000 aerospace professionals work in Maryland to cover the entire supply chain, representing one of the most concentrated pools of talent in the nation. These industry leaders are building spacecraft and satellites and developing new technology from instruments, to coatings, to flight systems, to everything in between. From large contractors providing valuable work to the federal space mission to medium and small businesses innovating, developing, and supplying a wide array of missions, there is a robust network of successful private companies with operations in Maryland that will continue to thrive and provide workforce opportunities alongside the new Academy.

For the Space Academy students who want to become pilots on their personal journey to reaching space, they can follow in the footsteps of the over eighty astronauts that have trained at the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School at Naval Air Station Patuxent River. That connection also highlights Maryland's ideal position to help with the continued expansion of the U.S. Space Force. Maryland hosts training facilities for Guardians at Fort Detrick and Joint Base Andrews, as well as many other facilities that support military research and development in other branches, like Fort Meade and Aberdeen Proving Ground.

The additional array of science agencies housed in Maryland further supports our objectives in space, providing future Academy students with access to invaluable expertise in addition to our country's civil space agency. The National Institute of Standards and Technology, headquartered in Gaithersburg, ensures the accuracy and calibration of systems critical to space exploration and satellite technology. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, based in Silver Spring, works closely with NASA and the commercial space sector to monitor space weather and atmospheric conditions using space-based instruments. The Department of Energy, the nation's largest funder of basic research in physical sciences, supports a variety of technologies

such as nuclear power and propulsion systems that are intimately tied to the nation's ambitious technological goals for space.

The Space Academy should be located in a state that can maximize opportunities for its students, as the success of the Academy will depend on an unprecedented blend of leadership from academia, civil and commercial space, and the U.S. military. Maryland offers an extensive network of scientific talent, commercial entrepreneurship, and military expertise that will be vital to an Academy experience for the talented individuals it will support and develop.

We are confident that when given full and fair consideration, Maryland will stand out as the best and right choice for the United States Space Academy.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss why our state is the right home for this new institution at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress

Glenn F. Ivey
Member of Congress

Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress

Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress

Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
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Johnny Olszewski, Jr.
Member of Congress

April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress