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March 13, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting funding for the Future Air and Space Ports Security Initiative in Fiscal Year 2027. The entity to receive funding for this project is The Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station, located at 1111 RELLIS Parkway, Suite 5226, Bryan, Texas 77807. The funding would be used to design future air and space ports that are secure and resilient against heterogeneous threats, including cyber failures/attacks, kinetic attacks (e.g., drone intrusions), and environmental hazards (e.g., severe weather, birds). The rapid evolution of the aerospace economy, across civilian and military sectors, is necessitating new space and air ports, including vertiports for unmanned aircraft systems (UASs) and space ports capable of handling multiple spacecraft types. The initiative will coalesce industry, government, and academic stakeholders with expertise in aviation/space systems, cybersecurity, and automation, to pursue secure-by-design solutions for future ports. Specifically, a research program with three inter-disciplinary thrusts is envisioned: a) the design of air and space port infrastructures and policies to ensure cybersecurity (cyber); b) the development of systems and policies that protect ports against kinetic threats (kinetic); c) real-time detection and mitigation of diverse cyber, kinetic, and environmental threats to ensure resilient operations (real-time resilience). The research program will be coupled with an industry consortium that engages air, space, and cyber industry partners, port operators, and university/lab researchers to support technology transition and policy adoption. The overall aim is to build and transition multi-faceted defense-in-depth security technologies for future air and space ports. The project will focus particularly on supporting the vibrant aviation and space industry surrounding NASA Johnson Space Center and the Houston Spaceport.

Motivation and Problem Statement: Both air and space ports are evolving rapidly. Specifically, the growing use of uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS), increasingly heterogeneous aircraft types (e.g., supersonic, low-energy), and changing operational paradigms are necessitating the

development of new ports and port architectures for aviation. In parallel, new space ports are being constructed for both private and government-led initiatives to launch new space systems. Relative to today's airport network, these future air and space ports will be distinguished by their heterogeneity, rapid development, high levels of automation, and high decentralization. However, because of their economic value and complexity, these future ports are, by their nature, vulnerable to diverse threats (cyber, kinetic, environmental, and economic). The program addresses the development of the scientific methods and technologies needed to secure future air and space ports against a range of threats.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds because of the potential economic benefits: Broadly, the growth of a new air and space economy holds promise to deliver significant economic benefits across the United States, and specifically in Texas and Congressional District TX-36. Security threats, broadly defined, are a barrier to this economic growth because they slow integration and the widespread adoption of new technologies, ultimately stifling further innovation. In addition, the direct costs of attacks/failures on air and space assets can be very large, as evidenced by recent cyber and kinetic attacks and failures. Indeed, current government-wide aviation and space initiatives (e.g., the effort to normalize Beyond Visual Line-of-Sight flight) recognize the central need for security and require that technologies and policies be in place to ensure it. The proposed project directly addresses these security concerns and therefore holds promise to alleviate costs associated with threats and to spur economic development. Specific to TX-36, the project will also directly support the research and operational missions of NASA's Johnson Space Center, the Houston spaceport, and a vibrant air & space technology sector. A substantial portion of the project funds (~\$2.5-\$3 Mil) will directly support research and development activities within the district.

The project has a federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes described in section 20102 of title 51, United States Code. [for NASA SSMS projects] I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Babin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress