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36TH DISTRICT, TEXAS
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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 UTMB's Aerospace Medicine Program and Immersive Operational Training in Fiscal Year 2027. The entity to receive funding for this project is The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston (UTMB), located at 301 University Blvd, Galveston, TX 77555. The funding would support and expand our residency program, including the creation of additional resident positions. We also seek funding to develop immersive, simulation-based operational space medicine training by constructing a mock space capsule, a mini-Mission Control environment, and advanced medical simulation capabilities. If funding is secured, discussions are underway regarding the feasibility of housing the mock space capsule at Space Center Houston.

These investments will ensure healthcare providers and researchers acquire the foundational operational skills necessary to support government, military, and commercial human spaceflight activities. With this support, UTMB will continue to meet the growing demand driven by our return to the moon and by the expanding commercial space sector. UTMB's Aerospace Medicine Residency Program has led the nation in space medicine training for more than thirty years, graduating nearly 70 physicians for civilian and military roles since 1993. As an integral aspect of their program, UTMB's residents spend significant time training at NASA Johnson Space Center. Our alums include past and current Chief Medical Officers at Blue Origin, SpaceX, Sierra Space, Starlab, and Vast, as well as physicians currently serving at NASA and on active duty in the U.S. military.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds because investing in it advances a critical national priority: safeguarding human spaceflight while strengthening a rapidly growing sector of the Texas and U.S. economies. As government and commercial missions to low-Earth orbit and the Moon expand, the health and safety of astronauts – highly trained professionals

representing significant taxpayer investment – remain critical. Supporting UTMB’s Aerospace Medicine Program ensures that the nation maintains a pipeline of expert physicians capable of protecting these crews throughout all phases of flight.

For taxpayers, this initiative represents a responsible and high-impact use of federal dollars. Expanding residency capacity and building advanced simulation infrastructure, including a mock spacecraft capsule, directly improves mission readiness, medical innovation, and emergency preparedness. These resources benefit military, civilian, and commercial operators while also enhancing STEM education, public engagement, and regional research capacity – yielding enduring public benefits well beyond their initial cost.

For Texas’ 36th Congressional District, the project reinforces the region’s role as the epicenter of human spaceflight, anchored by NASA’s Johnson Space Center and a rapidly growing commercial aerospace corridor. As commercial human spaceflight becomes an increasingly significant component of the district’s economy, this investment supports industry growth by preparing medical professionals who can meet the needs of both government and private-sector missions.

Locating the new training equipment within the district increases visibility into next-generation space operations and strengthens the local workforce pipeline. By preparing physicians and other healthcare providers who support current and future astronauts, this initiative bolsters economic growth, attracts industry partnerships, and ensures that Southeast Texas remains indispensable to America’s leadership in space.

Ultimately, this investment protects the people who venture into space, benefits the public they serve, and strengthens a district and nation that rely on safe, successful human spaceflight.

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", written over a vertical line.

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

