

HENRY CUELLAR, PH.D.  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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March 19, 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 House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting funding for McDonald Observatory, Fort Davis, in Fiscal Year 2027. The entity to receive funding for this project is The University of Texas at Austin McDonald Observatory, located at 82 Mount Locke Road, Fort Davis, TX 79734. The Community Project Funding would be used to upgrade the 2.7-meter telescope to enable fully robotic, autonomous operations and enhance its capability to detect, track, and characterize satellites, near-Earth asteroids, and transient space objects. This project will benefit the community by helping protect the space-based systems that support communications, navigation, and economic activity. It will also expand undergraduate engagement in engineering, observational astronomy, and AI/ML-driven data analysis, providing hands-on training in space research and workforce development in high-demand STEM fields.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds because it strengthens national capabilities in space situational awareness, supports monitoring of near-Earth objects, and advances technologies critical to both scientific research and national security.

The project has a federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes described in Section 20102 of title 51, United States Code.

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,



Henry Cuellar  
U.S. Congressman  
28th District of Texas