

January 20, 2025



The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: ROCKET ENGINEERING, ANALYSIS AND COLLABORATION HUB (REACH) AT EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE. PROGRAM ELEMENT 91211F. CATEGORY CODE 319-442. PROJECT NUMBER FSPM163502. SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Rogers:

We write to you today to express our **SUPPORT** for the proposed Rocket Engineering, Analysis, and Collaboration Hub (REACH) at Edwards Air Force Base (Edwards AFB) (Program Element 91211F, Category Code 319-442, Project Number FSPM163502). This innovative facility will address the vital need for additional and improved space for Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL)'s rocket propulsion programs, help advance critical technologies for national defense and support quality job creation and economic dynamism in Kern County and the Antelope Valley.

For more than half a century, AFRL Rocket Propulsion Division (AFRL/RQR) at Edwards AFB has made significant and pioneering contributions to our national security through testing materials, fuels and propulsion devices, such as the engines of every US ICBM system and technologies in "new space" vehicles. Despite this

storied history, there has been insufficient investment in facilities to keep pace with requirements for research, development, test and evaluation. Today, AFRL/RQR Branch functions and personnel are scattered across eleven facilities, ranging in age from 40+ to 60+ years, long past the end of their useful lifespans.

AFRL and the United States Space Force need properly sized and configured facilities to support existing research activities, secure space and advanced rocket modeling and simulation capabilities and enable new collaboration with academia and industry in distribution A work areas. REACH will address the critical need for supporting multiple classification levels, collaboration space for the surge in public-private partnerships and expanding AFRL/RQR's ability to work with space industry entrepreneurs, academia and international partners.

In 2020, B3K Prosperity, a regional economic collaborative serving Kern County, Calif., together with partners spanning the public, private and civic sectors, identified aerospace and defense as an opportunity industry with the capacity to fuel economic growth in the region and create quality jobs for local residents. A significant factor contributing to the potential of our region's aerospace and defense sector is our unmatched concentration of Department of Defense and federal innovation assets, including AFRL/RQR, Edwards AFB, NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center and the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division (NAWCWD). However, despite the presence of these incredible assets, our region has largely failed to unlock the potential of existing Department of Defense and federal innovation to drive economic dynamism. Since 2021, B3K Prosperity has collaborated with partners within the region and across the state to nurture an innovation ecosystem through accelerating tech transfer and transition, developing K-16 career pathways and building a skilled workforce aligned to industry and Department of Defense needs, supporting the growth of private sector employers in the industry and advocating for infrastructure investments to enable a thriving and self-sustaining ecosystem.

Concurrently, aerospace, space and defense have emerged as a priority sector for other regions across California, namely the Central Coast and Los Angeles County, and a statewide network of aerospace, space and defense stakeholders has emerged to collaborate and support efforts that address the needs and priorities of this vital sector across city and county lines.

REACH will provide a centralized modern and secure facility, replacing woefully outdated buildings and fragmented workspaces and providing much needed space to expand collaborative innovation among DoD, academia, entrepreneurs and industry. In doing so, REACH will not only advance national security priorities but also help unlock the potential of AFRL/RQR as a catalyst for economic growth and job creation, both within the region and across the broader California aerospace, space and defense ecosystem.

For these reasons and more, we urge your support for REACH.

Sincerely,

Georgia Petropoulos, President & CEO
B3K Prosperity

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisors

Senator Shannon Grove
State Senate, 12th District

Assemblyman Tom Lackey
State Assembly, District 34

Stephen Farmer, Executive Director
China Lake Alliance

Ronald Strand, City Manager
City of Ridgecrest

Richard Chapman, CEO
Kern EDC

Marquette Hawkins, Mayor
City of California City

Drew Mercy, Executive Director
AV EDGE

Greg Garrett, City Manager
City of Tehachapi

Joshua Boswell, Vice President of Policy & Economic
Development
REACH Central Coast

Richard J. Loa, Mayor
City of Palmdale

Rebecca McCourt, Executive Director
Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce

George Hodgkinson, President
Mojave Chamber of Commerce

Scott O'Neil, Executive Director
Indian Wells Valley EDC

Derek Kirk, Senior Advisor for Economic Policy
Governor's Office of Business and Economic
Development, State of California

Janelle Capra, President & CEO
Bakersfield Chamber