Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 20, 2026

Dr. Patricia Lee, Ph.D.
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
625 Indiana Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Dr. Lee:

We write to request an evaluation by the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board of the U.S. Department of Energy's (the Department or DOE) sweeping "Project Velocity" initiative announced on August 13, 2026, through which the Department has revised 46 operating directives and cancelled four other directives.

As the primary independent Federal agency charged by Congress with providing recommendations and oversight regarding defense nuclear facilities, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (the Board or DNFSB) plays a critical role in ensuring that public health and worker safety are preserved across the nuclear security enterprise.

We are deeply concerned over the scale and speed of these regulatory changes, particularly because the changes touch upon nuclear facility safety, quality assurance, conduct of operations, worker training, and incident reporting. We remain very concerned about these simultaneous changes weakening critical safety controls and diminishing independent Federal oversight.

To help us evaluate the safety implications of Project Velocity and ensure that robust, independent safety oversight is maintained, we request that the Board provide answers to the following questions within 30 days of this letter:

1. **Board Consultation and Engagement:** To what degree, if any, was the DNFSB consulted or involved by the Department prior to the August 13, 2026, announcement of Project Velocity? Please detail all formal or informal reviews, briefings, or technical consultations provided to or requested from the Board regarding Project Velocity.

2. **Safety Impact Assessment and Documentation:** Has the DNFSB performed, or is it currently performing, a technical evaluation of the impact of these directive changes and cancellations on nuclear safety standards, risk management, and quality assurance across defense nuclear facilities? Please provide us with copies of any reports, safety evaluations, technical memos, or written assessments generated to date regarding these regulatory changes. Does any technical evaluation consider the cumulative impacts of simultaneously making all changes with directives?

3. **Role in Long-Term Safety Oversight:** Has DOE communicated or indicated what specific role, if any, the DNFSB will have in monitoring these changes over time to help ensure they do not lead to adverse safety outcomes, operational risks, or compromised worker safety at defense nuclear sites? If not, what role could the DNFSB play in

monitoring these changes and what authorities (if any) and additional resources would be necessary to carry out that level of independent oversight?

4. **Cancellation of Key Safety Directives:** What is the Board's assessment regarding DOE's decision to wholesale cancel DOE Order 231.1B (*Environment, Safety and Health Reporting*), DOE Order 232.2A (*Occurrence Reporting and Processing of Operations Information*), and DOE Order 442.2 (*Differing Professional Opinions for Technical Issues Involving Environmental, Safety, and Health Technical Concerns*)? Does the Board anticipate that these cancellations will affect early-warning oversight, trend analysis, or safety culture at defense nuclear facilities? Prior to cancellation, did the Board rely on any of the reporting that was formerly required under these DOE Orders to carry out its independent safety oversight role? Does the Board anticipate that the cancellation of these orders will decrease access to key safety, health, and occurrence reporting information necessary to perform its statutory responsibilities?

5. **Preservation of Independent Oversight Authority:** Do any of the revised DOE directives, newly delegated contractor authorities, or altered review timelines impair, restrict, or otherwise impact the Board's statutory access to defense nuclear facilities, safety-related data, or personnel necessary to conduct independent oversight? If so, in what ways?

We thank the Board for its dedicated service and continued commitment to the safety of our Nation's defense nuclear operations and workforce. We look forward to your response within 30 days.

Sincerely,



Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
House Committee on Appropriations



Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Senate Committee on Appropriations