REED: The international space station, one of the nation's greatest assets for research and discovery, is in low earth orbit, and the commercial crew program will be providing transportation to ISS to support that first step as a gateway to space.

BRADY: The research that we do in low earth orbit is very important to develop the systems that we'll need, and the capabilities that we'll need, to protect our crews for these deep space exploration missions.

MASSA: The International Space Station is our orbiting laboratory, and it allows us to do research on life and physical sciences, and really understand the impact of living without gravity.

MASSA: If we understand how organisms respond to gravity and to a lack of gravity, then we'll be able to think about how humans and other organisms might survive on other planets.
It really is a test bed for how do I, how do I go away from Earth for three years, and go to Mars and get back.

Right now one of the biggest constraints that we have on station is the available hours for astronauts to be dedicated strictly towards research.

And that's why we're so excited by the commercial crew program, because it'll be bringing additional astronauts to the space station, so we're going to have a lot more time to do science.

A lot of the technology we've developed on space station has come back home here to earth in order to benefit people.

For example, the robotics that have been so important in the building and the maintaining of the space station have come down to earth in the form of robotic surgery.

Think about that crazy day when, instead of just having astronauts that represent NASA interests, you're now able to have private researchers that go up to help and
look at research that might enhance life on
earth, or looking at ways to go and better

create drugs, or therapies that can improve
patient care on the ground.

Some would sit there and say, ‘That’s
a wild idea,’ but that idea is coming closer

and closer with every single day.