November 20, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger:

The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) – a broad-based group of professional organizations, universities, scientific societies, and businesses – appreciates Congress' continued support for the fundamental scientific research and educational programs supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF). As Congress seeks to finalize fiscal year 2021 (FY21) appropriations legislation, we urge Congress to negotiate and pass the FY21 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill and make a significant funding increase for NSF a high priority.

We greatly appreciate the good work of both chambers to increase the government's investment in NSF. We request that Congress appropriate **at least $8.548 billion for NSF in FY21, as reflected in the House mark.** We recognize the challenges faced this year by budget caps and the tight funding environment.

We respectfully suggest, however, that this level of funding is insufficient to address the effects of years of underinvestment in the fundamental scientific research and STEM education supported by NSF and falls short of the funding trajectory needed to continue U.S. leadership in science and technology.

CNSF supported a request of $9 billion for NSF in FY21, seeking to address the effects of years of high-quality grant proposals that go unfunded due to limited funding. Those unmet needs continue. A 2019 National Science Board report stated that in FY 2018, "approximately $3.4 billion was requested for declined proposals that were rated Very Good or higher in the merit review process." The U.S. is leaving potentially transformative scientific research and efforts to enhance STEM education on the table, while other countries are making significant investments. One effective way to combat this concern is to ensure that NSF receives the highest funding level to support as many of its strong proposals as possible.

This will allow NSF to support burgeoning national priorities such as addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, artificial intelligence, and quantum information sciences, and ensure that long term curiosity-driven research lays the foundation for future national priorities that we can't envision today.

We are also at a critical time building and ensuring a stable STEM workforce of the future, a challenge exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is vitally important that the NSF is able to support graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and other early career scientists, who are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the most likely to have had their career goals deferred or derailed. At this challenging time, we cannot risk losing a generation of scientists who leave the field and never return. This is also an especially important time to enhance public understanding of science. NSF plays a critical role in supporting these STEM career pathways, as well as supporting research to adapt our STEM education system to meet the enormous challenges of education in the time of COVID-19, a rapidly evolving economy and preparing for a future with AI, and building diversity and growing our STEM capacity by engaging all of America's talent. To address these disruptions and ensure that cutting-edge research and talented young scientists are not adversely affected for years to come, Congress must also provide emergency funding to the agency now.

We are grateful for your continuing interest in the work of scientists and science educators and your support for the NSF. For the last 70 years, NSF has been an essential pillar of America's scientific enterprise and is the only federal agency with the mission of supporting all the scientific disciplines. Research supported by the agency is vital to the public interest and essential if our country is to stay at the forefront of scientific progress and the cutting edge of technology and innovation. Now is the time for the U.S. to make a significant and robust investment in NSF.

Sincerely,

The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF)

American Anthropological Association

American Association of Geographers

American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM)

American Association of Physics Teachers

American Astronomical Society

American Chemical Society

American Educational Research Association

American Geophysical Union

American Institute of Biological Sciences

American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering (AIMBE)

American Institute of Physics

American Mathematical Society

American Physical Society

American Physiological Society

American Political Science Association

American Psychological Association

American Society for Microbiology

American Society of Agronomy

American Society of Civil Engineers

American Society for Engineering Education

American Society of Mechanical Engineers

American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics

American Society of Plant Biologists

American Sociological Association

American Statistical Association

Arizona State University

Association for Psychological Science

Association for Women in Mathematics

Association for Women in Science

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of American Universities

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC)

Battelle

Biophysical Society

Boise State University

Boston University

Brandeis University

Brown University

California Institute of Technology

Cavarocchi Ruscio Dennis Associates

Coalition for Academic Scientific Computation

Computing Research Association

Consortium of Social Science Associations

Cornell University

Council of Graduate Schools

Council on Undergraduate Research

Crop Science Society of America

Duke University

Eastman

Ecological Society of America

Entomological Society of America

Eversole Associates

Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

Florida State University

Forge Policy Solutions

Geological Society of America

George Mason University

Georgia Institute of Technology

Harvard University

IEEE-USA

Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology (IRIS)

Indiana University

Lehigh University

Lewis-Burke Associates LLC

Linguistic Society of America

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Mathematical Association of America
Michigan State University
Michigan Technological University
Mineralogical Society of America
Museum of Science, Boston
National Association of Marine Laboratories
National Communication Association
National Postdoctoral Association
National Science Teachers Association
New York University
Northeastern University
Northern Illinois University
Northwestern University
OSA-The Optical Society
Penn State University
Population Association of America/ Association
    of Population Centers
Princeton University
Psychonomic Society
PsySiP: Psychology of Science in Policy
Purdue University
Research!America
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
SACNAS
SAGE Publishing
Seismological Society of America
Society for American Archaeology
Society for Industrial and Organizational
    Psychology
Society for Neuroscience
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for the Psychological Study of Social
    Issues (SPSSI)
Soil Science Society of America
SPIE
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State University of New York System (SUNY)
Stevens Institute of Technology
Stony Brook University
The Ohio State University
The Optical Society
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