January 27, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Democratic Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Republican Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Republican Leader  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders Schumer, McConnell and McCarthy:

As Congress develops additional legislation to implement the “American Rescue Plan” and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coalition for National Science Funding asks that you address the challenges faced by the scientific research community, specifically the need to restore the research enterprise and safeguard our nation’s research workforce. We encourage Congress to include $3 billion in emergency relief for the National Science Foundation (NSF) while providing relief to all federal science agencies.

NSF is the premier agency to address social and behavioral science, education, engineering, modeling, and fundamental biological challenges raised by the pandemic. Thanks to your leadership, Congress appropriated $76 million in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act for the NSF to support its response to COVID-19, including through the Rapid Response Research (RAPID) and Early-Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) funding mechanisms. As part of efforts to improve understanding of the virus, develop predictions of its spread, and help mitigate its impacts on public health, society, and the economy, NSF awarded more than 1300 grants, including more than 500 quick-response RAPIDs, to researchers across the country, demonstrating NSF’s role as a frontline agency in our nation’s push to respond to and recover from the pandemic. However, these grants only scratched the surface of research needs.

Though our nation’s scientists and research institutions have risen to the challenge of the pandemic, they are facing enormous strains on their operations and infrastructure. NSF needs additional funding to support research grants, students and post-docs, early-career faculty, and scientific facilities. Federally funded scientists and engineers are experiencing significant negative impacts to their work during the pandemic, such as delays or cessation of their research projects, an extremely challenging academic and research job market, lab closures, and uncertainty about continuing to pay salaries, extend timelines, access needed lab equipment, and...
more. These impacts have disproportionately affected students, trainees, and early-career researchers, who make up an important segment of NSF award recipients. Without emergency relief, we risk many early-career researchers and STEM students leaving science altogether, losing a generation of diverse talent that is the bedrock of our national competitiveness. We would also lose the return on the investments that we have already made in the careers of U.S. scientists and engineers, the research they advance, and the research infrastructure that supports them.

Last fall, the House-revised Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) legislation included $2.9 billion for NSF, largely directed toward “extensions of existing research grants, cooperative agreements, scholarships, fellowships, and apprenticeships.” Though this provision did not advance in the final relief package, we encourage you to include it in the rescue package now being drafted. NSF must be able to support its researchers at this critical time and avoid the potential loss of critical innovations and our future workforce.

We appreciate your leadership during this difficult time as Congress continues to respond to the wide-ranging fallout from this pandemic. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,
The Coalition for National Science Funding

cc:
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations
Materials Research Society
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
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
St. Louis University
State University of New York System
(SUNY)
Stevens Institute of Technology
Stony Brook University
The Ohio State University
The Optical Society
Tufts University
UCLA
UNAVCO
University of California System
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado Boulder
University of the District of Columbia
University of Florida
University of Illinois System
University of Iowa
University of Maryland, College Park
University of Michigan
University of Nebraska
University of Oklahoma
University of Oregon
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
University of Vermont
University of Virginia
University of Wisconsin-Madison
US Ignite
Vanderbilt University
Verizon
Washington State University
West Virginia University
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
Yale University