October 25, 2019

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 2020 (FY20) appropriations legislation, we respectfully offer two recommendations. First, we urge Congress to complete the FY20 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill before the current continuing resolution expires on November 21. Second, we strongly urge Congress to 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, and recognize that the House-passed mark of $8.6 billion would place NSF on the upward funding trajectory that it needs to continue U.S. leadership in science and technology. We request that Congress appropriate at least $8.6 billion for NSF in FY20. We respectfully suggest, however, that additional funds are needed to address the effects of years of underinvestment in the fundamental scientific research supported by NSF.

CNSF’s original appropriations request of $9 billion for NSF in FY20 sought to address the effects of years of underinvestment in the fundamental scientific research supported by NSF. Those unmet needs continue. A 2017 National Science Board report stated, “approximately $3.92 billion of cutting-edge research deemed very good or higher in NSF’s merit criteria was unfunded in FY 2017.” The U.S. is leaving potentially transformative scientific research on the table, just as our allies and adversaries are making significant investments. One effective way to combat this concern is to ensure that NSF receives the highest funding level feasible so that the agency can support as many of its strong proposals as possible. This will allow NSF to support national priorities such as artificial intelligence, quantum information sciences, and advanced manufacturing. Otherwise, instead of the U.S. leading in the 21st century, we will fall behind other nations who are pushing forward in these areas.

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.
Thank you for considering our views. We are grateful for your continuing support for NSF.

Sincerely,

The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF)
Lehigh University
Lewis-Burke Associates LLC
Linguistic Society of America
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Materials Research Society
Mathematical Association of America
Michigan State University
Michigan Technological University
Museum of Science, Boston
National Association of Marine Laboratories
National Communication Association
National Postdoctoral Association
National Science Teachers Association
Northern Illinois University
Northwestern University
OSA, The Optical Society
Pennsylvania State University
Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers
Princeton University
Psychonomic Society
PsSyP Project
Research! America
Rutgers University-New Brunswick
SAGE Publishing
Saint Louis University
Seismological Society of America
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology
Society for Neuroscience
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
Soil Science Society of America
SPIE
Stevens Institute of Technology
Stony Brook, The State University of New York
Texas Tech University
The Ohio State University
The State University of New York System
The University of Wisconsin-Madison
University Corp for Atmospheric Research
University of California System
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, San Diego
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Florida
University of Illinois System
University of Iowa
University of Maryland, College Park
University of Michigan
University of Oregon
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
Vanderbilt University
Washington State University
Washington University in St. Louis
West Virginia University
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution