

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Chairman  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Babin  
Chairman  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cruz, Chairman Babin, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Ranking Member Lofgren:

The National Science Foundation (NSF) was established in 1950 “to promote the progress of science, to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare, and to secure the national defense.” Over the last 75 years, NSF has resoundingly delivered on this mission through its support of basic research and education in the non-medical sciences and engineering. As noted in the recent celebratory press release from Chairman Babin and Chairman Obernolte,<sup>1</sup> “NSF investments have driven groundbreaking innovations... played a key role in the work of 268 Nobel Prize laureates, helping to shape many of their landmark achievements... [and] delivered remarkable returns for American society.”

Several fundamental aspects of NSF’s structure and operation have been critical in enabling its broadly successful record:

- **NSF works in close partnership with U.S. colleges and universities.** By deploying federal funding at the institutions where students and early career researchers are taught and trained, NSF provides essential support for the development of a skilled U.S. STEM workforce.
- **NSF supports powerful scientific facilities that are beyond the ability of any single institution to build and operate.** By giving scientists across the country access to these tools – supercomputers, telescopes, gravitational wave and neutrino observatories, and ocean drilling vessels, among others – NSF ensures that world-leading discoveries are within the reach of all Americans talented and dedicated enough to grasp them.
- **NSF supports research that is driven by curiosity and discovery.** The axiom that “it’s tough to make predictions, especially about the future” is as true for science as it is for baseball.<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to precisely forecast which investments will lead to which results, but by supporting cutting-edge, curiosity-driven, and merit-based investigations in a wide range of fields, today’s

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<sup>1</sup> Press release at: <https://science.house.gov/press-releases?ID=A915B3D4-4534-4D34-9B18-47E779BB57FA>.

<sup>2</sup> Versions of this statement have been attributed to American baseball player Yogi Berra and Danish physicist Niels Bohr.

NSF funding builds the foundation for tomorrow's U.S. leadership in science, technology, education, and the global economy<sup>3</sup>.

- **NSF funding is distributed on the basis of a highly competitive review process.** NSF's thorough merit review provides a framework for exercising wise stewardship of U.S. taxpayer dollars: it considers the intellectual merit and the societally relevant benefits of proposed research, incorporates input from experts in the field and expert program officers at the agency, and funds the strongest competitors among large pools of proposals.

As the leaders of professional societies and organizations whose members conduct research in fields supported by NSF, we are deeply concerned by imminent threats to the aforementioned elements of NSF's structure and operation, and therefore its ability to serve as an engine of U.S. leadership and prosperity. We urge you to exercise your oversight authority to investigate recent organizational and financial developments, some of which may be at odds with existing statutory directives:

- abrupt reorganizations and reductions in force at NSF, which will deprive the organization of essential disciplinary and operational expertise;
- plans to reduce the Congressionally-mandated broad scope of research and education programs and projects supported by NSF, which would represent an abandonment of its successful curiosity-driven approach;
- plans to preemptively reduce the highly skilled NSF workforce and program portfolio to match a budget proposal prior to appropriations action by Congress;
- abrupt cancellations of existing NSF grants – proposed and approved in good faith and in accordance with all previous regulations – on which scientists, teachers, their students, and their institutions had been relying; and
- abrupt reduction of the indirect cost rate for NSF grants without first partnering with the recipient community to develop a more efficient and transparent model for funding such costs.

Over the past 75 years, your committees and bipartisan Congressional majorities have offered strong support and oversight for NSF and its mission. This steady hand has facilitated American leadership in basic science research and education across a broad array of disciplines. We urge you to continue exercising your oversight authority before the damage to this leadership becomes irreversible.

Sincerely,

ACA: The Structural Science Society  
American Association for Dental, Oral, and  
Craniofacial Research  
American Association of Geographers  
American Association of Physics Teachers  
American Astronomical Society

American Chemical Society  
American Educational Research Association  
American Geophysical Union  
American Geosciences Institute  
American Institute for Medical and Biological  
Engineering (AIMBE)

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<sup>3</sup> The Dallas Federal Reserve has shown that government-funded R&D accounts for one fifth of all gains in productivity achieved since World War II (<https://www.dallasfed.org/-/media/documents/research/papers/2023/wp2305r2.pdf>).

American Institute of Biological Sciences  
American Mathematical Society  
American Physical Society  
American Physiological Society  
American Political Science Association  
American Society for Cell Biology  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Statistical Association  
American Vacuum Society  
Association for the Sciences of Limnology and  
Oceanography  
Association for Women in Mathematics  
Association of American Universities (AAU)  
Association of Population Centers  
Biophysical Society  
Coalition for Academic Scientific Computation  
Computing Research Association  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council of Graduate Schools  
Council on Undergraduate Research  
Crop Science Society of America  
Ecological Society of America  
Federation of American Societies for  
Experimental Biology (FASEB)

Federation of Associations in Behavioral and  
Brain Sciences  
Forge Policy Solutions  
Geological Society of America  
Institute for Operations Research and the  
Management Sciences (INFORMS)  
Linguistic Society of America  
Mathematical Association of America  
Orthopaedic Research Society  
Orthopaedic Trauma Association (OTA)  
Population Association of America  
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics  
Society for Neuroscience  
Society for Research in Child Development  
(SRCD)  
Society of Environmental Toxicology and  
Chemistry of North America  
Soil Science Society of America  
SPIE  
The Good Food Institute  
The Oceanography Society  
The Society for Industrial and Organizational  
Psychology  
University of Colorado Boulder  
University of Oregon

Cc: Chairman Ted Budd  
Ranking Member Tammy Baldwin  
Chairman Jay Obernolte  
Ranking Member Haley Stevens