January XX, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray  The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger  The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chair Granger, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) – an alliance of over 140 professional organizations, scientific societies, universities, and businesses united in our advocacy for the National Science Foundation (NSF) – we urge you to fund NSF at the highest level possible in FY 2024 appropriations. NSF investments are key to bolstering U.S. innovation and competitiveness by funding highly meritorious curiosity-driven research; building and fostering U.S. STEM education and workforce programs; supporting scientists and engineers with cutting-edge facilities; and addressing the most pressing issues of our time.

Thank you for your efforts to protect investments in the NSF in FY 2024 appropriations. We understand the difficult fiscal climate and appreciate the prioritization of NSF in both the Senate and House bills to keep NSF funding at approximately FY 2023 levels while other programs have faced cuts. Cuts to NSF would be absolutely devastating to our innovation ecosystem and national security. However, the current level of funding at $9.5 billion falls far below our competitiveness needs. Flat funding will impede NSF’s ability to fully stand up the Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships (TIP); threatens the success of the Regional Innovation Engines program to transform regional economies; delays needed infrastructure projects; and slows investments in critical emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) institutes.

We appreciate the House’s proposed higher overall level of funding for NSF at $9.63 billion. However, we are concerned by the deep cuts proposed in the House bill for the Directorate for STEM Education. The Directorate funds critical workforce training programs, graduate fellowships and traineeships, research to
improve STEM education at all levels, and important programs that broaden participation in STEM and ensure that we can harness talent from all regions of our country. We are facing enormous workforce shortages in emerging technologies while our adversaries are investing major amounts to build their science and technology ecosystems. We will not be able to compete without the researchers, technicians, and other STEM workers of the future and we cannot meet our workforce needs without reaching students from all backgrounds. NSF education research programs are innovating to ensure our K-12 and undergraduate education systems can meet the needs of teachers and learners in a rapidly changing world. We call on STEM EDU funding to be protected in the final bill.

We are facing major competition from China in critical technologies such as AI and quantum, and we will lose our leadership if we don’t expand our research and innovation ecosystem. As you know, the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act demonstrated strong congressional intent for major NSF growth. The law authorizes $15.6 billion in FY 2024 to advance these critical technology areas, enable transformational efforts to enhance regional innovation, and increase support for foundational research and education activities. NSF will also not be able to implement the numerous new activities outlined in CHIPS and Science without substantial additional funding as specified in the Act. We urge Congress to include NSF in any supplemental funding package focused on bolstering our defense and national security.

As you work to finalize FY 2024 appropriations, we urge you to fund NSF at the highest possible level and to use supplemental funding to bring NSF funding to the level authorized in CHIPS and Science. Thank you for your continued bipartisan support for NSF and the millions of scientists, engineers, students, and entrepreneurs it supports to advance cutting-edge research, STEM education, and technology that will benefit us all.