December 1, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

On behalf of the below 45 scientific societies and organizations, united in our appreciation of and support for the critical role of the National Science Foundation (NSF) in contributing to the development of STEM education and the STEM workforce – we are writing to urge you to fund NSF at the highest level possible in FY 2026 appropriations and direct sustained funding for the STEM Education (EDU) Directorate. We also encourage Congress to advance the Senate version of the bill and report and to work with NSF and the broader community before making significant changes to how funding for EDU Directorate programs should be allocated within NSF.

The EDU Directorate is a critical, interdisciplinary component of NSF. EDU programs are responsible for building fundamental knowledge on STEM learning across the education lifespan to engage interest in STEM subjects, developing innovative programs to build computational thinking essential to work in emerging technologies, and supporting STEM K-12 educators in high-need areas and evidence-informed STEM instruction. Investment in NSF is critical to support research to inform an educational system that will continue to incorporate technology inside and outside the STEM classroom, including through the EDU Directorate.

Activities supported by EDU encourage the retention and success of STEM talent throughout the postsecondary pipeline, including undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral training. The EDU Directorate also provides funding for initiatives to build the skillsets of higher education leadership to engage future generations of STEM education researchers and the STEM workforce.

The demand for a skilled STEM workforce emphasizes the need for Congress to ensure that the EDU Directorate continues to have sufficient resources to support and scale evidence-based STEM education practices and to strengthen the knowledge in STEM needed to succeed across scientific disciplines and emerging technologies. The FY 2026 budget request – both through a significant 75 percent cut to the EDU Directorate and the assignment of funding EDU Directorate programs within the Research and Related Activities account – threaten the leadership that NSF has in STEM education and supporting the STEM workforce. As it currently stands, NSF is using the FY 2026 budget request as the operational baseline for driving agency priorities in STEM education even before an appropriations law has been enacted.

As one example, several programs that have led to increased access for all students to and the development of evidence-based programs in K-12 STEM education – Discovery Research PK-12, Advancing Informal STEM Learning, and Computer Science for All – have been consolidated into a new NSF K-12 STEM program. The initial amount of $30 million allocated for grants is significantly less than what had been available in prior years from those three programs combined.

Within higher education, the Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) has enabled the career trajectories of students who have gone on to make significant scientific breakthroughs. In light of recent updates NSF has made to the GRFP program, robust funding for NSF can help ensure that the agency can strengthen investment in GRFP awards. Additional initiatives that have expanded access and engagement in STEM programs in higher education, such as ADVANCE and Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate, have allocations in the Senate FY 2026 proposal but have been archived by NSF.

We thank you for your continued bipartisan efforts to support NSF in FY 2026 appropriations. As you work to finalize FY 2026 appropriations, we urge you to fund NSF to at least the funding level proposed by the Senate, to ensure that NSF has the necessary funding to support STEM education research and the development of STEM skills across all disciplines. This includes a thoughtful consideration in collaboration among Congress, NSF, and the scientific and education communities on updates to the CHIPS and Science Act and the appropriations process for the structure for funding the STEM Education Directorate.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Learning Innovation
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)
American Astronomical Society
American Chemical Society
American Educational Research Association
American Geophysical Union (AGU)
American Institute for Biological Sciences
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering (AIMBE)
American Mathematical Society
American Political Science Association

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Cell Biology
American Society for Microbiology
American Statistical Association
Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback
Association for Psychological Science
Association for Women in Mathematics
Behavior Genetics Association
Biophysical Society
Cognitive Science Society
Computing Research Association
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Graduate Schools
Council on Undergraduate Research
Ecological Society of America
Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences
Flux Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience Society
National Academy of Neuropsychology
National Association of Marine Laboratories
New America's Future of Work & Innovation Economy Initiative
Psychonomic Society
Social & Affective Neuroscience Society (SANS)
Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology
Society for Computation in Psychology
Society for Experimental Social Psychology
Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology
Society for Judgment and Decision Making
Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc.
Society for Psychophysiological Research
Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)
Society for Text & Discourse
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Geological Society of America
The Planetary Society
Vision Sciences Society