

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 4, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Sethuraman Panchanathan
Director
National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Ave
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear President Trump and Director Panchanathan,

We write to express our grave concerns with the recent firing of 168 workers at the National Science Foundation (NSF). Federally-funded scientific research has been critical in moving our country forward on everything from cancer treatments and energy independence to artificial intelligence and quantum computing. Hamstringing this funding, whether through stripping the grants themselves or by paring back the NSF workforce that administers them, will not only cripple our scientific progress for generations, but will also allow our adversaries like China to gain the upper hand.

These indiscriminate firings include program managers and experts who play central roles in grant funding decisions – the very people who ensure American taxpayers’ dollars are going toward the most efficient and promising research projects possible.¹ In addition to these critical losses, an internal NSF source indicated the agency is planning to lay off between one-quarter and half of its staff in the next two months.²

These rash decisions, alongside the Administration’s freeze on NSF grant funds and cancellation of all grant review panels,³ will not only cause our country to miss out on the scientific breakthroughs that cancelled research could lead to, but we could also lose a generation of scientists who cannot complete their NSF-supported graduate and postdoctoral training. A “brain drain” from the federal government, or from the STEM fields overall, would be catastrophic.

We agree with the Administration that privately-funded research is vital to our economy. However, this research funding is not able to fill the gap created by the hollowing out of the NSF. Federally-funded research exists precisely because there are many projects which are critical to our national advancement, yet their financial payoff is too distant or amorphous to attract private investment. Private pharmaceutical companies would not be able to develop drugs without federally-funded research into disease processes, and private satellite companies could not put their creations into orbit without federally-funded astrophysics research.

If our country fails to continue to make these advancements, we fear that China and our other research-focused adversaries will fill the gap and get ahead. This poses a threat to our national security not only because of the potential improvements in defense-related technologies, but also because more and more of the free world will become dependent on their inventions and economy, giving China the upper hand in world affairs.

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00525-1?linkId=13063361>;
<https://www.wired.com/story/national-science-foundation-february-2025-firings/>

² <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/04/science-funding-agency-layoffs-threat-00202426>;
<https://www.science.org/content/article/trump-orders-cause-chaos-science-agencies>

³ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00365-z>

To address these concerns, we request answers to our questions below by March 31, 2025:

1. How will your Administration ensure that NSF research dollars are spent as productively as possible without the necessary knowledgeable staff evaluating grant applications?
2. What is the Administration's plan to ensure that all of the Congressionally-appropriated NSF funds are spent, as required by existing law?
3. How will your Administration, with a weakened NSF, prevent China from overtaking the United States as the global leader in scientific and technological advancement?

We believe the NSF is a key driver of our nation's competitiveness in science and technology, and these short-sighted layoffs could damage our economy and national security for generations to come. We urge you to promptly reply with answers to our questions in order to strengthen our nation's scientific research workforce and infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



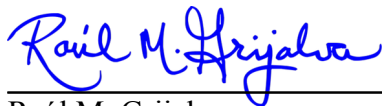
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



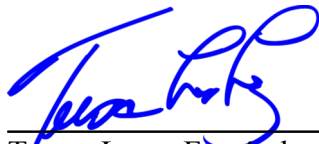
Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress



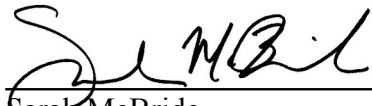
Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress



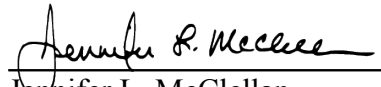
Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



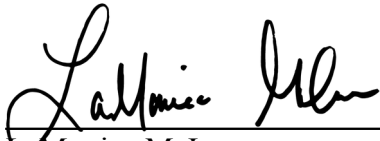
Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver
Member of Congress



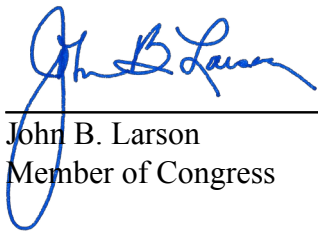
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



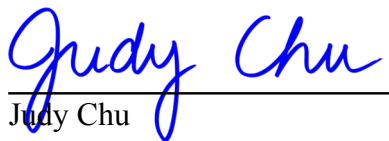
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



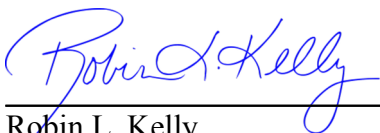
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



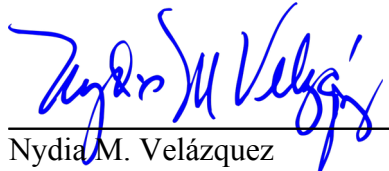
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



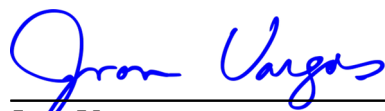
Laura Friedman
Member of Congress



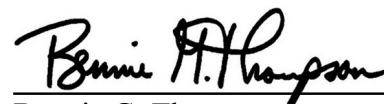
Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



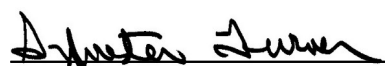
Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



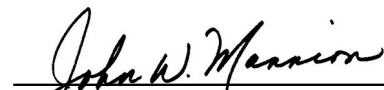
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



Sylvester Turner
Member of Congress



John W. Mannion
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



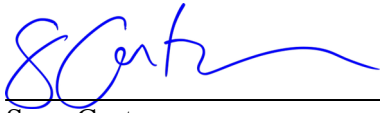
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



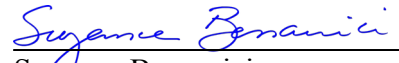
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "SCasten", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sean Casten
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Bonamici", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Emanuel Cleaver", with a large circular flourish around the name.

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress