May 26, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As president of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), I write to express my alarm about reports that research funding may be eliminated in bipartisan negotiations on an infrastructure package. Lawmakers should include research infrastructure funding in any infrastructure package passed through Congress. Strong federal investments in research agency infrastructure and instrumentation grant programs now will pave the way for America to continue to lead the world in higher education and scientific research. These investments are key to the development of a globally competitive U.S. workforce. Investments in science have proven their worth time and time again.

APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities. Annually, our 203 U.S. member campuses enroll 4.3 million undergraduates and 1.2 million graduate students, award 1.2 million degrees, employ 1.1 million faculty and staff, and conduct $46.8 billion in university-based research.

APLU was disheartened to see that the White House offered to recede their initial proposal to invest in research and development (R&D) as a component of infrastructure package discussions. The Administration’s initial proposal to invest $40 billion to upgrade research infrastructure in laboratories across the country, including brick-and-mortar facilities and computing capabilities and networks is worthy of pursuit and much needed. Similarly, the Administration’s plan outlined worthwhile investments to support infrastructure across a broad spectrum of institutions, including Minority Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Our nation is at risk of falling behind our international competitors when it comes to R&D investments and it is critical for us to invest strategically now. According to the National Science Board’s (NSB) 2020 Science and Engineering Indicators,¹ “where once the U.S. was the uncontested leader in science and engineering, we are now playing a less dominant role.” According to the NSB report, global R&D shares declined for the United States between 2000 and 2017. At the same time, the economies of East-Southeast and South Asia increased their combined global share from 25% to 42% and this region now leads in global R&D expenditures. Access to leading-edge equipment and updated laboratory facilities

---

will help our nation’s scientists and engineers create new knowledge and innovations to improve human health, address the challenges of climate change, support our economic and national security.

While APLU is grateful for the Senate’s eagerness to support bold legislation such as the United States Innovation and Competition Act and look forward to the House consideration of the NSF for the Future Act or other legislation, these pieces of legislation are authorization bills and do not provide direct financial support for our federal research agencies at this stage. To reach the bold visions proposed by both Congress and the Administration, we must allocate real dollars to these programs.

Congress has previously come together to include research infrastructure investments at our nation’s leading research agencies in comprehensive infrastructure legislation. In 44 states, a research university is one of the five largest employers. Providing new investment in research infrastructure will have significant impacts in states and localities all over the country.

It is imperative that Congress once again consider research infrastructure funding as we look to stimulate the economy, create good paying jobs, and set our nation on a path towards sustained growth. Specifically, APLU requests targeted research infrastructure funding to already established and well-vetted programs at the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter. We look forward to working with you as an infrastructure package continues to be developed and debated in Congress.

Sincerely,

Peter McPherson
President
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

CC: Members of the U.S. Senate
    Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

---