



May 27, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-226, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
437 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairman Leahy,

We represent the leading national voices for the research universities, medical schools, and teaching hospitals at the forefront of our nation's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. We thank you for your continuing efforts to mitigate the pandemic's harmful health, economic, and societal consequences. In April, we [wrote](#) to Congress identifying \$26 billion in research relief funding needs due to disruptions caused by COVID-19. Today, we reiterate the urgency of that request and ask that the Senate provide supplemental appropriations for federal research agencies of *at least* \$26 billion in its next pandemic relief bill.

COVID-19 has caused enormous disruptions to federally supported research and inflicted serious and detrimental impacts on our nation's research enterprise. The relief that we are requesting would make significant strides in avoiding long-term and devastating impacts to federal research which underpins the ability of our nation's patients, doctors, innovation and energy industries, and farmers, ranchers, and fishers to have access to globally-competitive, American innovations.

Federally supported research at academic institutions and core research facilities utilized by agency-funded researchers has been disrupted, delayed, and, in some cases, indefinitely shut down. The research workforce is experiencing extraordinary strains during this crisis. It threatens to erode our nation's scientific and technical expertise and talent base, which would put our competitiveness and security at risk. Addressing these serious threats has generated bipartisan support in both the Senate and the House. In the past month, 214 members of Congress have signed letters asking Congressional leadership to support emergency funding to preserve the research workforce.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [April 29, 2020 bipartisan letter](#) from 181 Members of the House to leadership requesting \$26 billion in research relief for federal research agencies; [May 4, 2020 bipartisan letter](#) from 33 Senators to leadership requesting \$26 billion in research relief for federal research agencies.

This emergency relief funding is especially critical to maintaining and advancing U.S. competitiveness during this crisis through innovations supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Defense (DOD), and Energy (DOE), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and other federal research agencies. There has been an extraordinary response from academic scientists who, where possible, have pivoted to coronavirus research during this emergency, but much other on-site research has necessarily stalled due to widespread stay-at-home orders. Scientists have been doing what they can to move projects forward remotely, but with many researchers unable to work in their labs and fields during the pandemic, emergency relief funds are urgently needed at the federal research agencies to extend the duration of research projects and ensure the objectives of these federal research investments that have already been made are met.

We cannot afford to lose the nation's scientific research workforce at this critical juncture. At a time in which we are in a global race for talent, this agency funding will directly support graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, and early career faculty in completing their studies and ensure career stability for America's future researchers.

**We urge that *at least* \$26 billion in emergency research relief funding be appropriated to federal research agencies to support the research workforce, mitigate the disruptions to research and core research facilities, and ramp up research that has been halted or slowed. These funds do not expand the nation's investment in research, but are desperately needed just to preserve the current investment.** This recommendation is based on the best available information at this time from the federal research agencies, the duration of the public health emergency and its impacts on research activities, and our understanding of the complexities of restarting research at research institutions in every state nationwide. We recommend this funding be apportioned to federal research agencies, at minimum, as follows:

- Department of Defense (DOD) – \$3 billion
- Department of Energy (DOE) – \$5 billion
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) – \$10 billion<sup>2</sup>
- National Science Foundation (NSF) – \$3 billion
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) – \$2 billion
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) – \$380 million

As part of the at least \$26 billion for federal agencies, we request supplemental appropriations for other federal agencies with a research budget greater than \$100 million, including NOAA, NIST, EPA, the Institute for Education Sciences, and others. Like the aforementioned major federal agencies, significant research disruptions necessitate additional funding to these agencies to protect the research workforce and complete taxpayer-funded research projects. These estimates are based on currently available information, which includes an estimated duration of laboratory closures that began in March, continued into May, and will persist to varying degrees as institutions begin ramping up research.

Without these funds, the consequences for our nation's university research and scientific enterprise are dire. Agencies will be forced to choose between abandoning new research opportunities of national importance or discontinuing existing research projects that are not yet completed. This would undermine the public's

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<sup>2</sup> At a May 7, 2020 hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins NIH Director testified that "The estimates are something like \$10 billion of NIH funded-research that is going to disappear because of the way in which this virus has affected everybody requiring this kind of distancing and sending people home." He also indicated, "I worry particularly about trainees who have lost time, who are really quite concerned about what this does to their professional career." <https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/shark-tank-new-tests-for-covid-19>.

investment in research and slow discovery and innovation, while at the same time jeopardizing a generation of scientists and engineers critical to America's innovation capacity and economic competitiveness for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership during this extraordinary time of crisis.

Sincerely,



Mary Sue Coleman  
President  
Association of American Universities



Peter McPherson  
President  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities



David J. Skorton, MD  
President and CEO  
Association of American Medical Colleges



Ted Mitchell  
President  
American Council on Education

cc:     Members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations  
          Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry  
          Members of the Senate Committee on Armed Services  
          Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
          Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
          Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

The Association of American Universities (AAU) is an association of 63 U.S. and two Canadian leading research universities that transform lives through education, research, and innovation. AAU member universities collectively help shape policy for higher education, science, and innovation; promote best practices in undergraduate and graduate education and strengthen the contributions of leading research universities to American society. The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is a research, policy, and advocacy organization with a membership of over 200 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, that is dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through innovative medical education, cutting-edge patient care, and groundbreaking medical research. Its members comprise all 155 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems; and more than 80 academic societies. The American Council on Education (ACE) is a membership organization that mobilizes the higher education community to shape effective public policy and foster innovative, high-quality practice. As the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities, our strength lies in our diverse membership of more than 1,700 colleges and universities, related associations, and other organizations.