

May 12, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole
House of Representatives
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Senate
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
House of Representatives
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Senate
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cole, Chairwoman Collins, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Vice Chairwoman Murray:

Our organizations, representing the full breadth of America's scientific, technological, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) research, urge you to fully support and fund the National Science Foundation (NSF) at the highest levels possible in the Fiscal Year 2027 budgetary process.

A serious concern that has arisen is the Administration's proposal to eliminate the Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) and the research it supports. We consider the work of the directorate as an indispensable and essential part of the nation's overall research enterprise. Even though our organizations represent scientific and technological fields that primarily receive research funding from other parts of NSF, we view SBE as a critical asset for advancing our respective scientific missions.

While we share the Administration's commitment to advancing "industries of the future," such as advanced materials and manufacturing, biotechnology, AI, and quantum sciences, and applaud prioritizing these topics, we caution that eliminating the SBE Directorate undermines these very goals and is ultimately self-defeating for the nation. We are deeply concerned by the significant changes to the NSF funding portfolio, reducing its ability to serve the broader mission of NSF. While we certainly appreciate the importance and value of priorities, these priorities should not be funded by the elimination of support for whole STEM disciplines and lines of inquiry.

On a bureaucratic level, eliminating or moving parts of SBE would create significant, detrimental inefficiencies. Other Research and Related Activities directorates would have to duplicate efforts by creating and staffing their own behavioral research units, negating any supposed gains to other fields of study. Essential interdisciplinary research would suffer, as SBE serves as a vital cross-directorate partner, integrating the human element across NSF's portfolio. The loss of SBE's scientific expertise would have long-lasting, potentially permanent, negative effects on the national research community.

Many of the nation's most pressing policy questions have a scientific or technological component that needs to be understood through a human lens, including through integrated modeling and design approaches that combine technical systems with human behavior. That is where the research that SBE supports comes into play, providing crucial data and theoretical frameworks that inform work across the entire research enterprise, including the biological, computer and information sciences, engineering, and the mathematical and physical sciences. Examples include research on team collaboration informing engineering design and understanding economic incentives for energy efficiency, as well as examining the impact of modern air power for national security. NSF's support for SBE has even resulted in a remarkable number of economics Nobel laureates. Solving the most challenging modern research and development problems, such as the societal impacts of AI, cybersecurity, or public health, requires more than just technical research; the persistent barriers are fundamentally human.

We urge you to support the full scope of the National Science Foundation during the Fiscal Year 2027 funding process and reject the Administration's proposal to eliminate the SBE Directorate.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Data Science and AI
American Association for the
Advancement of Science
American Association of Physics
Teachers
American Astronomical Society
American Geophysical Union (AGU)
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Mathematical Society
American Physiological Society
American Society for Engineering
Education
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Statistical Association
Association for the Advancement of
Artificial Intelligence (AAAI)
Association for Women in Mathematics
Association for Women in Science
Coalition for Academic Scientific
Computation
Computing Research Association
Coastal and Estuarine Research
Federation

Council for Exceptional Children -
Division for Research
Council of Graduate Schools
Council on Undergraduate Research
Entomological Society of America
Federation of American Societies for
Experimental Biology (FASEB)
Geological Society of America
INFORMS
Mathematical Association of America
NARST: A global organization for
improving science education through
research
National Council on Measurement in
Education
National Council of Teachers of
Mathematics (NCTM)
National Organization for the Professional
Advancement of Black Chemists and
Chemical Engineers (NOBCCChE)
Optica, Advancing Optics and Photonics
Worldwide
Society for Biomaterials

Society for Environmental Toxicology and
Chemistry of North America
Society for Industrial and Applied
Mathematics
Society for Neuroscience
Society for Research on Educational
Effectiveness

SPIE, the international society for optics
and photonics
USENIX Association
US Technology Policy Committee -
Association for Computing Machinery

CC:

House Appropriations CJS Subcommittee Chairman Hal Rogers
House Appropriations CJS Subcommittee Ranking Member Grace Meng
Senate Appropriations CJS Subcommittee Chairman Jerry Moran
Senate Appropriations CJS Subcommittee Ranking Member Chris Van Hollen
House Science, Space, and Technology Committee Chairman Brian Babin
House Science, Space, and Technology Committee Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren
Senate Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee Chairman Ted Cruz
Senate Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee Ranking Member Maria Cantwell