

April 2, 2022

Dear USICA/COMPETES Congressional Conferees:

As institutions of higher education from across the country, we thank you for your efforts to support and revitalize the U.S. federal science and innovation ecosystem via a bold and aggressive competitiveness strategy to secure our global position. We believe that a diversity in funding recipients – including researchers, students, and institutions historically underrepresented in federal research funding – adds to the richness of science and research, and we support efforts to build research capacity at a diverse array of institutions. However, we do not believe that proposals for new massive set-aside requirements for the Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) program at the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy or any of the federal science agencies would successfully achieve that goal. Rather, we urge you to support effective efforts to increase research capacity at emerging research institutions across the entire country that do not impose statutory percent set-aside mandates for specific states in the final bill.

We applaud the bipartisan recognition that research, STEM education, innovation, and scientific talent are fundamental to the U.S. economy, our global competitiveness, and national security. As important centers of regional innovation activity, we know that the U.S. is in the midst of a high-stakes global competition for scientific talent and a race to develop new technologies and scientific breakthroughs. In such a highly competitive and consequential environment, we agree that it is imperative that we broaden the participation of federally funded researchers and students, regardless of geographic location.

That is why we are especially concerned about statutory language to mandate that a percentage of any science agency's annual appropriation be limited to only fund institutions in EPSCoR states. Doing so would significantly disadvantage students and researchers at hundreds of emerging research institutions and minority serving institutions (MSIs) as well as the communities those institutions serve.

We understand and very much appreciate that Congress is attempting to address a significant challenge: how to promote institutional development and research capacity at more of the nation's colleges and universities so as to involve more geographic areas of our country as engines of economic growth. Focusing on a solution that sets resources aside for only EPSCoR-eligible states would not effectively address this concern. While additional funds would become available to institutions in EPSCoR states, this approach would significantly constrain the funding available to regionally-important underrepresented or emerging institutions in the 25 non-EPSCoR states, including HBCUs, other MSIs, regional universities, and community colleges. These institutions would be ineligible to compete for a significant portion of scientific research and education funding based solely on the happenstance of their state's geography and without consideration of their own institutional or community needs.

We thank Congress for recognizing the need for investment in strategic capacity building at emerging research institutions. We strongly support the new programs and robust funding levels included in the legislation to bolster participation in science and STEM education across the country. These efforts will enable more students to participate in STEM education programs and more scientists and engineers to have the tools and resources to contribute to our culture of innovation.

We share your commitment to growing and expanding participation in the American research ecosystem to ensure that populations that have been historically underrepresented in research funding are better represented. This will have a profound effect on communities in states across the country. We urge you to achieve this goal without mandating percentage set-asides for particular geographic regions and thereby disadvantaging smaller and emerging research institutions, MSIs, and community colleges in half the states in the country.

Sincerely,

Adelphi University
Alfred University
American Museum of Natural History
Arizona State University
Assumption University
Augusta University
Austin Peay State University
Azusa Pacific University
Biola University
Boston University
California Institute for Human Science
California Polytechnic State University
California Polytechnic University, Pomona
California State University, Monterey Bay
California State University, Sacramento
Central Michigan University
Chapman University
Christian Brothers University
Claremont Graduate University
Colorado State University
Cornell University
Dominican University of California
Drexel University
Duke University
East Carolina University
East Tennessee State University
Emmanuel College, Boston
Emory University
Fisk University
Florida A&M University

Florida Atlantic University
Florida International University
Florida Polytechnic University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Georgia Southern University
Georgia State University
Grand Valley State University
Hartwick College
Illinois Institute of Technology
Illinois State University
Johns Hopkins University
Kent State University
Lehigh University
Lipscomb University
Loyola University Chicago
Marquette University
Menlo College
Miami University of Ohio
Michigan State University
Michigan Technological University
Middle Tennessee State University
Mills College
Missouri State University
Missouri University of Science and Technology
Molloy College
Morgan State University
Mount Saint Mary's University, Los Angeles
New York Institution of Technology
New York University

North Carolina State University
Northern Arizona University
Northern Illinois University
Northwestern University
Oakland University
Occidental College
Ohio University
Oregon State University
Pace University
Palo Alto University
Penn State University
Penn State University
Point Loma Nazarene University
Portland State University
Princeton University
Rhodes College
Rice University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rutgers University - New Brunswick
Rutgers University-Camden
Rutgers University-Newark
Salisbury University
Samuel Merritt University
San José State University
Santa Clara University
Seton Hall University
Siena College
Smith College
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
St. Bonaventure University
St. Mary's College
Stanford University
Stevens Institute of Technology
Stony Brook University
Tarleton State University
Temple University
Tennessee Tech University
Texas A&M International University
Texas A&M University
Texas A&M University-Central Texas
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
The California State University

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology
The Florida State University
The Ohio State University
The Texas A&M University System
The University of Arizona
The University of Houston
The University of Missouri
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
The University of Texas at Arlington
The University of Texas at Dallas
The University of Texas at San Antonio
The University of Texas at Tyler
The University of Texas Permian Basin
The University of Texas System
The University of West Florida
UC Berkeley
UC San Diego
UC Santa Barbara
UCLA
UMass Chan Medical School
Union College
University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources
University of California Riverside
University of California San Francisco
University of California System
University of California, Davis
University of California, Irvine
University of California, Merced
University of California, Santa Cruz
University of Central Florida
University of Connecticut
University of Dayton
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Illinois System
University of Maryland Eastern Shore
University of Maryland, Baltimore
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
University of Maryland, College Park
University of Massachusetts Amherst
University of Massachusetts Boston
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
University of Massachusetts Lowell

University of Memphis
University of Michigan
University of Michigan-Dearborn
University of Missouri Kansas City
University of Missouri-St. Louis
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
University of North Carolina System
University of North Carolina Wilmington
University of North Texas
University of Oregon
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
University of Redlands
University of Rochester
University of Saint Katherine
University of San Diego
University of South Florida
University of Southern California
University of St. Thomas
University of Tennessee
University of the Pacific
University of Utah
University of Virginia
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Utah State University
Utica University
Vanderbilt University
Villanova University
Virginia Commonwealth University
Virginia Tech
Wagner College
Washington State University
Washington University in St. Louis
Wayne State University
West Texas A&M University
Western Michigan University
Western New England University
Western University of Health Sciences
William & Mary
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Yale University