

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2018

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Shaheen:

We write today to express continued support for National Science Foundation (NSF) programs that promote the inclusion of more women, minorities, and other traditionally underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education, professions, and careers. We appreciate your past support for programs that promote a diverse workforce, and ask for your continued commitment to these programs as you begin to work on funding legislation for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY 2019).

Diversity in the workforce promotes creativity, productivity, and innovation, and makes the United States more competitive as a country on the global level. As we progress through the 21st Century, the world becomes an increasingly more competitive place. Now, perhaps more than ever before, expanding our pool of talented individuals with STEM backgrounds by broadening participation in STEM education, professions, and careers is important to maintaining U.S. leadership and long-term competitiveness in the STEM fields.

NSF's programs to broaden participation in the STEM workforce are important not only for maintaining global competitiveness, but also for establishing equity and inclusion in the STEM fields. According to the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES), women now comprise more than half of the college-educated workforce, but less than one-third of individuals who work in science and engineering occupations, and similar disparities for certain minority populations are even worse. Broadening participation is important for our country, and we can no longer afford to neglect individuals who show promise in STEM fields if we are to remain a global leader in STEM.

NSF Broadening Participation Programs (Broadening Participation Programs):

Programs that broaden participation at NSF strengthen and expand the agency's ability to discover and nurture talent across individual, institutional, and geographic networks, and support its efforts to develop the STEM workforce of the future. NSF defines broadening participation in terms of individuals from underrepresented groups (i.e. women, underrepresented minorities, and individuals with disabilities), traditionally underrepresented institutions, and underserved areas. Programs like NSF INCLUDES and ADVANCE have worked to improve the STEM pipeline.

We ask that you continue to support these programs and related efforts, and push back against the President's proposal to reduce cumulative funding across all programs that broaden participation at NSF by \$39 million in FY 2019.

NSF Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science (NSF INCLUDES):

NSF INCLUDES represents a comprehensive national initiative designed to enhance U.S. leadership in STEM by developing a diverse, innovative, and well-prepared workforce for the future, and earlier this year was identified by NSF as a "10 Big Ideas" priority for FY 2019. By supporting NSF's commitment to diversity and inclusion, the program seeks to contribute to new and improved career pathways, policies, opportunities to learn, and practices for equity and inclusion in STEM. Recent INCLUDES grants have supported initiatives in Hawaii to prepare and train Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) students in innovative educational approaches that promote practical and policy-based solutions to regional challenges, and others.

ADVANCE: Increasing the Participation and Advancement of Women in Academic Science and Engineering Careers (ADVANCE):

ADVANCE represents a commitment to developing better system approaches to increasing the participation and advancement of women in STEM—specifically in academic careers. Despite increases in the proportion of women pursuing STEM degrees, women remain underrepresented in faculty and administrative positions. ADVANCE works to promote gender equity by addressing issues related to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in academic settings. Recent grants have supported efforts at the University of Hawaii Community College (UHCC) system and the University of Hawaii Hilo (UHH) to identify and address obstacles to retention and advancement for women at Hawaii's community colleges, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Programs to Expand STEM Opportunities (Centers of Excellence):

Last year, the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (Pub. Law 114-389) reaffirmed our country's commitment to education, training, and retaining more scientists, engineers, and computer scientists in order to maintain our nation's economic leadership and global competitiveness, and identified historically underrepresented populations as the largest untapped STEM talent pools in the United States. AICA also provided NSF with the authority to award grants for the establishment of Centers of Excellence (COEs) in this pursuit. We encourage the promotion of efforts like these to broaden participation in STEM fields in the United States.

As you begin your work on funding legislation, we respectfully request your continued support for NSF programs that promote broader participation. Specifically, we ask that you support Broadening Participation Programs at no less than FY 2018 enacted levels for FY 2019. We also

ask that you support NSF INCLUDES at \$20 million and ADVANCE at \$18 million for FY 2019.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator




MARIA CANTWELL
United States Senator



MARGARET WOOD HASSAN
United States Senator



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



JEFFREY A. MERKLEY
United States Senator