January 23, 2019

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Republican Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Democratic Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear President Trump and Congressional Leaders:

As members of the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) – a broad-based group of professional organizations, businesses, universities, and scientific societies that advocate for sustained, robust federal support for the National Science Foundation (NSF) – we are writing to express our serious concerns about the impact of the government shutdown on America’s research enterprise.

CNSF urges you to end the government shutdown and enact a Fiscal Year 2019 Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations bill with at least $8.175 billion in funding for the NSF.

NSF-funded research has been invaluable to ensuring that the United States remains a leader globally in science and innovation, fueling the nation’s economy. The government shutdown is already starting to have an impact on the NSF-funded research conducted at the nation’s universities and research institutions. A further prolonged government shutdown will have additional serious, detrimental, and long-lasting consequences for the nation’s scientific enterprise and will threaten investments made toward advancing research and education.

NSF’s merit review process remains the gold standard for selecting the most innovative research projects across all disciplines of science. Since December 21, 2018, however, more than 70 scheduled review panels have been either cancelled or postponed because of the shutdown. This significant disruption in the review process means that new research projects will not get started, undergraduate and graduate students will not get funded, and the mission of the Foundation will be put on hold. Furthermore, NSF-funded major user facilities such as the Cornell High Energy Synrotron Source (CHESS) and the Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO) will approach the limits of available funding should this shutdown continue. These and other NSF-
funded user facilities are essential to the research conducted by the scientific community, which includes users from other agencies such as the Department of Defense and Department of Energy.

This shutdown is personally impacting members of the scientific community. Senior scientists are questioning how to pay their postdoctoral researchers, and some postdocs and fellows, many of whom are early in their careers, are not getting paid at all. Indeed, the shutdown is not only affecting the overall research enterprise but is taking a personal toll on those who are vital to its success.

A government shutdown greatly impedes the agency’s ability to make funding decisions, suspends new and ongoing research projects and slows the development of training the next generation of scientists and engineers. If the government shutdown continues it will have a cascading effect on the nation’s security and economy, endangering years of critical investments. It is important for the president and Congress to expeditiously reopen the government and complete the Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations process.

Sincerely,
Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF)