



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Haley Stevens (D-MI)
of the Subcommittee on Research and Technology

Subcommittee on Research and Technology Hearing:
A Review of the National Science Foundation FY 2020 Budget Request
May 8, 2019

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing to review the National Science Foundation Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request. Dr. Córdova and Dr. Souvaine, thank you for being here.

The National Science Foundation plays a critical role in advancing the U.S. scientific enterprise. NSF funding has enabled the inventions of things that have become commonplace in our lives: the first formal dictionary for American Sign Language, the development of bar codes, and the invention of the Internet. I would like to congratulate you both on the National Science Foundation's most recent breakthrough: the first image of a black hole.

As the only federal science agency that supports basic research across all fields of science and engineering, NSF provides about a quarter of the all federal support for basic research conducted at colleges and universities. For researchers in certain fields, like computer science, biology, and social science, NSF is the primary source of federal funding. NSF is also the principal source of federal support for STEM education at all levels and in all settings, from pre-kindergarten through career development. All of this enables the United States to lead the world in science and innovation, compete in the global economy, and protect the health and security of its citizens.

Funding for the NSF has steadily increased in recent years thanks to Congress rejecting repeated proposals for cuts from this President. The agency's budget exceeded \$8 billion for the first time in FY 2019.

I'll start with the good news. I applaud the agency for sustaining its commitment to the 10 Big Ideas. I am also glad to see full funding for the construction of major research facilities like the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernization Project and Large Synoptic Survey Telescope. Cutting-edge equipment and facilities are essential for researchers to push the boundaries of knowledge and for training the next generation of top scientists.

I also appreciate the prioritization of Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Science, two areas which will be critical for U.S. economic and national security. I'm happy to see increases in some areas for these two important areas of research in the FY 2020 budget proposal.

Unfortunately, this Administration continues to display a concerning lack of understanding of the importance of science with yet another round of drastic cuts in funding for scientific research across the government. The fiscal year 2020 request proposes to cut a full \$1 billion from the National Science Foundation budget.

Such a cut would threaten our nation's leadership in science and technology across all fields of science and engineering. Despite the increases in AI and Quantum, making this a zero-sum game by cutting other fields of science and engineering and eroding the foundational backbone of all emerging technologies is unwise at best.

The FY 2020 budget proposal would also slow progress in STEM education, including in diversifying our STEM workforce, the topic of a full committee hearing in this Committee tomorrow. We are seeing a surge in demand for workers with STEM skills across all sectors and educators are struggling to keep up. Within months of releasing its 5-year strategic plan in STEM education, the Administration put forth a proposal to gut STEM education programs government-wide.

It worries me that this Administration does not truly understand the importance of scientific funding to our nation's innovation goals. This proposal represents a vision for science that, if realized, would be disastrous for our nation's long-term welfare, security, and competitiveness.

Dr. Córdova, I appreciate the leadership of you and Dr. Souvaine, and I look forward to a discussion with you both about the value of the National Science Foundation as a critical national asset and the potential impacts of these cuts.

Thank you.