

Congress of the United States
Washington D.C. 20515

April 23, 2021

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable Kei Koizumi
Acting Director
Office of Science and Technology Policy
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20504

Dear Acting Directors Young and Koizumi:

We write to ask for your support of legislation which authorizes \$25 billion in research relief, the *Research Investment to Spark the Economy (RISE) Act* (H.R. 869/S. 289), in the 117th Congress. As you know, the pandemic has brought harm and suffering to individuals, communities, and our nation in countless ways. While families who lost loved ones will carry that burden forever, we will recover quickly from much of the short-term damage, thanks in part to the remarkable scientists who so quickly developed effective vaccines. There are long-term impacts, however, from which we may not recover without due attention and sufficient resources. We write today specifically to call out the immediate needs for our nation's research enterprise, which has suffered significant disruptions as a direct result of the pandemic. This request does not address the equally critical need to invest in renewing and modernizing our aging research infrastructure and recommitting to our investments in research and development for our long-term competitiveness, which will also need attention.

While supplemental funding has been provided to institutions and students through Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF), and to a few science agencies specifically for COVID-related research, funding has not yet been provided specifically for research relief. Universities and other research institutions have absorbed the impacts to research activities in a variety of ways, retrofitting laboratory space, providing extended leave flexibilities to faculty and staff, and in some cases providing funding to address immediate needs. This triage, however, is not sustainable without additional federal support for the government-university partnership. The consequences of the pandemic born by research institutions and researchers themselves are now putting our national innovation future at risk.

We believe it is vital that the Administration prioritize measures to spur the recovery of our nation's basic research enterprise from the harmful impacts of the pandemic. Funding is needed to allow federal agencies to support research and researchers, by providing research grant and contract supplements (i.e., cost extensions) for expenses arising from COVID-19 related impacts; emergency relief to sustain research support personnel and some base operating costs for core

research facilities and user-funded research services; and support for additional graduate student and postdoc fellowships, traineeships, and research assistantships. As highlighted in a recent report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, these disruptions are taking an especially significant toll on women and under-represented minorities in STEM, and their inability to continue in these fields may eliminate the modest gains made in recent years to improve equity and diversity in these areas.¹ If we fail to turn those trendlines back in the right direction, we may never fully recover our STEM talent pipeline.

Developing and sustaining the U.S. talent pipeline is critical to maintaining the innovation-rich sectors of our economy. We are deeply concerned that the gap in agency funding will put the research workforce, and U.S. competitiveness, at risk. Research funding is a key economic engine for recovery: IRIS estimates² that U.S. university research funds pay more than 560,000 people on campuses across the country, more than half of which are students or trainees. Until such time research recovery funds are approved, it is important that federal research agencies provide maximum administrative flexibility to address the challenges posed by the pandemic. This includes allowing agencies to provide grant extensions, supplements, and caregiver supplements, among other things, even if these flexibilities are not typically available. Agencies should publicize that these flexibilities remain in effect and provide clear guidance about how to request them.

Research Relief is also a bipartisan priority. More than 125 bipartisan members of Congress have co-sponsored the *RISE Act* to provide \$25 billion to the federal agencies to recover from the pandemic. Furthermore, in late February, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee held a full committee hearing about “Building Back the Research Enterprise: COVID Impacts and Recovery.” Witnesses testified that “We remain in a global race for innovation advantage...and China continues to gain on our lead in total R&D expenditures...” Furthermore, “The trends have real and tangible effects at home and in our communities. Failing to take the right steps means not just the loss of innovations or companies but human capital and losing high-skilled jobs and opportunities.”³

We appreciate the Administration’s visionary goals to make tangible progress in areas like cancer and climate research and development, and we look forward to discussions about pending proposals such as the H-ARPA and ARPA-C initiatives. To fully realize these and other priorities, we must first ensure that we do not suffer significant losses to our most precious STEM resource – our human capital – or to the scientific progress we’ve already made. To be clear, this down-payment of \$25 billion in “recovery” funds does not preclude the need also to invest in rebuilding our research infrastructure and investing in research and development for our

¹ <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2021/03/emerging-evidence-indicates-covid-19-pandemic-has-negatively-impacted-women-in-academic-stem-fields-endangering-progress-made-in-recent-years>

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2021. *The Impact of COVID-19 on the Careers of Women in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26061>.

² https://iris.isr.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/COVIDfactsheetFeb2021_final.pdf

³ <https://science.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Parikh%20Testimony.pdf>

long-term competitiveness and innovation capacity. We must be willing to invest to achieve bold goals for our scientific enterprise.

We urge the Administration to consider the importance of research funding and support passage of the RISE Act. We look forward to discussing this issue further with you and your staff.

Sincerely,



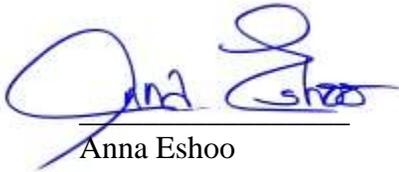
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chairwoman
Committee on Science, Space,
and Technology



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Fred Upton
Member of Congress



Anna Eshoo
Member of Congress



Anthony Gonzalez
Member of Congress