June 13, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, environment, and Related Agencies
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

We, the undersigned leading academic and other research organizations, are writing first and foremost to thank you for your support for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Science and Technology (S&T) program in the final fiscal year (FY) 2019 appropriations package. We appreciate your leadership and Congress' support for maintaining S&T funding levels, particularly for the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) program. As you work on the FY 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide at least $748 million for EPA S&T.

Funding for EPA S&T has decreased dramatically from a high-water mark of $846 million in FY 2010 to $706.5 million where it has remained since FY 2017. When accounting for inflation, the flat funding represents a further decline. The amount we are requesting in FY 2020 would accommodate continued investment in vital scientific research activities while allowing for additional funding to EPA's extramural research programs. Such an increase will be necessary for restoring EPA's ability to support a level of research activity commensurate with the environmental challenges facing the nation.

As Congress has recognized, EPA S&T funds an array of scientific research and technology development that is critical to informing constructive public health policy and educating the general public as well as enabling more cost-effective solutions to environmental and public health challenges. It is vital that the U.S. is equipped with the best available technologies and information to support national, state, and local environmental goals and to enable government to more efficiently, judiciously, and effectively allocate expenditures on environmental mitigation, protection, and remediation.

These views have been validated by the scientific community as articulated by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). In a series of reports issued over the last twenty years, NASEM has repeatedly extolled the value of EPA S&T as a mechanism for stimulating academic research; educating the public; cultivating the next generation of environmental scientists; developing and deploying novel technologies; and informing the creation of evidence-based environmental regulations. The innovations pioneered by EPA S&T have underpinned a variety of agency-led initiatives that have positively impacted human health and welfare, pollution control, and environmental sustainability.[1]

Within EPA S&T's external research programs, STAR provides research grants that support students and faculty at universities across the country, leveraging expertise from the academic community while simultaneously pioneering new technologies and strengthening the workforce pipeline. In 2017, NASEM released a comprehensive assessment of the program that reinforced this position. Specifically, NASEM

[1] National Research Council, "Science for Environmental Protection: The Road Ahead", 2012, available at https://www.nap.edu/catalog/13510/science-for-environmental-protection-the-road-ahead.

found that STAR is not only scientifically impactful, but that its merits extend to numerous aspects of public life, including:

- Public health decisions related to air pollution, water contamination, and pesticide exposure;
- Reductions in compliance costs to industry, states and localities through research-supported breakthroughs in chemical testing and air and water quality measurement;
- Development of an environmental and environmental health sciences workforce; and
- Support for new and advanced research infrastructure.[2]

Despite its value, funding for STAR has deteriorated consistently since its peak of $138 million (in 2016 dollars) in FY 2001 to $28 million where it has remained for the past three fiscal years. If this steep decrease and prolonged stagnation remain unaddressed, inflationary pressures will continue to weaken EPA's extramural research program.

Another key to the program's success has been its management through the National Center for Environmental Research, which ensures that the grants, contracts, and administrative functions and support of STAR continue. However, we recognize the need to reassess EPA's organizational structure in order to certify that it is optimized to meet its scientific mandates as effectively as possible. As such, we request that Congress ensure that any planned reorganization preserves the integrity and robustness of the agency's research enterprise while maintaining support for ongoing intramural and extramural programs, including STAR.

We look forward to working with you further and hope to serve as a resource for you as the FY 2020 appropriations cycle progresses.

Sincerely,

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Boston University
Carnegie Mellon University
Duke University
Entomological Society of America
Harvard University
Michigan State University
University of California (System)
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, Riverside
University of California, San Diego
University of California, Santa Barbara
University of Cincinnati
University of New Hampshire
University of Oregon
University of Rochester

[2] National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, "A Review of the Environmental Protection Agency's Science to Achieve Results Research Program", 2017, available at https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24757/a-review-of-the-environmental-protection-agencys-science-to-achieve-results-research-program.

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