July 1, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

On behalf of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematic (STEM) Education Coalition, we are writing in support of the new Administration’s request of $7.045 billion in fiscal year 2010 for the National Science Foundation (NSF). However, we remain very concerned that the Administration’s budget request falls short in providing adequate long-term investments in the programs of NSF’s Education and Human Resources (EHR) Directorate and its efforts to foster improvements in K-12, undergraduate, graduate, continuing education, vocational, career, and informal STEM education.

NSF has long-served as a catalyst for STEM education reform. NSF’s EHR Directorate seeks to advance discovery and innovation at the frontiers of STEM learning and teaching; support the conceptualization, design, testing, assessment, study and evaluation of highly innovative models and approaches to learning in formal and informal settings; advance equity and participation for all by building and strengthening participation in the scientific-technical enterprise; foster linkages between STEM education research and practice; and serve as the intellectual nexus that unites education research and evaluation activities across the Foundation and with other federal agencies.

Over the past several years, Congress has repeatedly demonstrated strong bipartisan support for increased investment to strengthen the U.S. STEM education pipeline and basic research in the physical sciences as reflected by the 2007 passage of the America COMPETES Act and the subsequent enactment of the fiscal year 2008 Supplemental Appropriations Bill and the recent American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Our Coalition commends Congress for these important actions.

The Administration’s fiscal year 2010 budget requests $857.76 million for the EHR Directorate, a 1.5 percent increase over the fiscal year 2009 level, not including the $100 million provided for EHR programs in fiscal year 2009 by the Recovery Act. While this funding level provides significant, much-needed resources for the education programs of NSF’s EHR Directorate, the proposed funding level for fiscal year 2010 is still significantly below the level of $1.1 billion authorized by the America COMPETES Act. Perhaps more significantly, we note that the 1.5 percent increase provided to the EHR Directorate is contrasted with an overall increase to the NSF budget of 8.5 percent and a 10.6 percent increase in its proposed budget for NSF’s Research and Related Activities account.

To be clear, our Coalition supports robust federal investments in NSF’s basic scientific research
programs that will inspire current and future generations of young people to pursue careers in STEM fields and bolster our country’s capacity for innovation and global economic competitiveness. However, it is also clear that if we want our nation to remain competitive in the global economy and continue to be a world leader in innovation, we must bolster our commitment to NSF’s educational mission. The position of our Coalition has consistently been that NSF’s research and educational missions must be treated as co-equal core missions of the Foundation. Accordingly, we strongly urge you to provide the highest possible funding for NSF’s EHR Directorate in fiscal year 2010.

If we can provide you any additional information on STEM education, please do not hesitate to contact James Brown at 202-872-6229 or Jodi Peterson at 703-312-9214.

Sincerely,

Allegheny-Singer Research Institute
Altshuller Institute for TRIZ Studies
American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
American Association of Physicists in Medicine
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Chemical Society
American Society for Engineering Education
American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc.
American Statistical Association
ASME Center for Public Awareness
Association for Computing Machinery
Association for Women in Science
Association of Science-Technology Centers
ASTRA, The Alliance for Science & Technology Research in America
Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS)
Biotechnology Institute
Buhach Colony Engineering Academy
California Healthcare Institute (CHI)
Campaign for Environmental Literacy
Chicago Educational Publishing Company, LLC
Council on Undergraduate Research
EAST Initiative
Education Development Center, Inc.
Engineers Without Borders-USA
ETA/Cuisenaire
Exploratorium
IEEE-USA
Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy
In Reach, Inc.
Information in Place, Inc.
INSPiRE, Institute for P-12 Engineering Research and Learning, Purdue University
Institute of Food Technologists (IFT)
International Technology Education Association
Kitchen Culture Education Technologies Inc.
Kitchen Culture Kits Inc.
Laurel School District, Delaware
LEARN Coalition
Maritime Academy Charter High School
Maryland Science Center
Math for America
Museum of Science, Boston
Museum of Science and Industry
National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering, Inc.,
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
National Center for Technological Literacy
National Council for Advanced Manufacturing
National Girls Collaborative Project
National Science Education Leadership Association
National Science Teachers Association
National Society of Professional Engineers
New York Hall of Science
New York State Technology Education Association
Ohio Mathematics and Science Coalition
Ohio Technology Education Advisory Council
Ohio Technology Education Association
Pathways into Science
PBS
Play Well TEKnologies
Project Exploration
SACNAS
Science Teachers Association of New York State
Self Sufficient Investors
Society for Research in Child Development
Society of Women Engineers
South Carolina's Coalition for Mathematics & Science
SPIE – The International Society for Optics and Photonics
STEM School Administrators Association
Technology Education Association of Massachusetts
Tennessee Science Teachers Association
Thunderbird Early College Charter School, Inc.
Triangle Coalition
University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown
Urban STEM Strategy Group