

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 28, 2013

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

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

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

As the Subcommittee drafts its FY 2014 appropriations bill, we write to request continued support and funding for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the National Science Foundation (NSF).

As you know, the Administration has proposed a dramatic consolidation of STEM education programs and a transfer of responsibilities across agencies. While we applaud the drive toward greater coordination and efficiency, we are concerned that consolidation will have significant unintended consequences in our home states. Further, it is unclear how the proposal will meet the goals of the Federal Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education 5 Year Strategic Plan mandated by the America COMPETES Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-358) and delivered to Congress on May 31, 2013. In fact, the proposed actions appear to pre-empt the Plan's process for assessing federal investments and for developing STEM program guidance with significant agency input.

Therefore, we respectfully request the Subcommittee's help in deferring action on the consolidation proposal. Preserving the current constellation of STEM programs at NASA, NOAA, and NSF will allow these agencies to finalize their STEM program assessments as required by America COMPETES. Minus these assessments, any attempt to consolidate or cancel programs is premature and risks the loss of effective investments into our nation's future.

Additional time will allow affected communities to thoroughly examine the consolidation proposal and to provide comment prior to any program changes. As proposed, cuts risk negatively affecting strong relationships between agencies and educators that help make the programs successful.

Finally, deferring consolidation will allow Senate authorizing committees to better evaluate proposed changes in agency funding and responsibilities. Full consideration of these changes is not currently possible as the Administration has yet to provide a plan ensuring that the new lead

STEM institutions – NSF, the Department of Education, and the Smithsonian Institution – can support the unique fellowship, training, and outreach programs now managed by other agencies.

Many current programs have a proven record of success. They not only contribute to the quality of STEM education provided to the current and future technical workforce but also directly support the strategic needs of their respective agencies. In this way, STEM programs use limited resources to maximize impact in areas of national importance.

While we very much appreciate the difficult choices the Subcommittee must make in an era of highly constrained resources, we believe that STEM education programs are important investments in the future health and well-being of our nation. We therefore respectfully request that, when the Subcommittee drafts its FY 2014 appropriations bill, it reaffirm the role of NASA, NSF, and NOAA in STEM education by delaying any program consolidation and restoring full funding to agency STEM initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Brian Schatz

Barack Obama

Dir. Austin

Lyndon B. Johnson

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Carl Levin

Maria Cantwell

John Thune

Jack Reed

Richard Blumenthal

Martin Hironaka

Elizabeth Warren

Mark Warner

Angus King