

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 9, 2024

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
& Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
& Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran,

We write to respectfully urge you to include in the Fiscal Year 2025 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill robust funding for, and report language related to, National Science Foundation's efforts to expand research capacity at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and align these efforts with the goals and criteria of programs as outlined in Section 10524 of the CHIPS and Science Act.

American innovation in STEM research has brought impactful advancements in nearly every sector, from medicine to transportation. With these advancements comes an increasing demand for new research and technically skilled employees. According to the National Science Foundation, while the STEM workforce has increased dramatically over the last decade, Black and Hispanic workers are underrepresented in the STEM workforce when compared to their share of the total population.¹ In addition, minority students are underrepresented among STEM degree recipients.²

As scientists and researchers work to discover life-saving cures and vaccines, develop ethical and unbiased applications of artificial intelligence, create innovative energy and transportation solutions, and explore the solar system, it is imperative that the scientific community reflects the diversity of America. Research has shown that broadening the racial and ethnic makeup of the STEM workforce can push researchers to pursue a wider breadth of problems and foster better discoveries.³

In 2022, Congress passed the CHIPS and Science Act (P.L. 117-167), which includes numerous provisions aimed at broadening STEM participation.⁴ Section 10524 directs the National Science Foundation to issue competitive grants to build institutional research capacity at HBCUs, MSIs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, and Alaska Native-Serving Institutions that have limited federal research expenditures and lack high research

¹ Elizabeth Grieco and Steven Deitz, *Diversity and STEM: Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities*, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (Jan. 30, 2023), <https://nces.gov/pubs/nsf23315/report>.

² *Id.* at p. 49.

³ See Lu Hong and Scott E. Page, *Groups of diverse problem solvers can outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers*, Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (PNAS) (Nov. 8, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0403723101>; *Science benefits from diversity*, Nature (June 6, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-018-05326-3>.

⁴ Chips and Science Act, Pub. L. No. 117-167.

activity status.⁵ Section 10524 authorizes \$1.2 billion over five years for this grant program and the Section 10523 grant program.⁶

According to the National Science Foundation, a new grant program to satisfy Section 10524 has not been created, however, the following programs align with the goals of Section 10524:

- Centers of Research Excellence in Science and Technology (CREST) Program: this program enhances the research capabilities of MSIs through the establishment of centers that effectively integrate education and research.
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities Excellence in Research (HBCU-EiR) Program: this program supports projects that enable STEM faculty to further develop research capacity at HBCUs.
- Growing Research Access for Nationally Transformative Equity and Diversity (GRANTED) Program: this program addresses systemic barriers within the nation's research enterprise by improving research support and service capacity at emerging research institutions.
- Improving Undergraduate STEM Education: Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Program: this program enhances the quality of undergraduate STEM education and increases the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of students pursuing associates or baccalaureate degrees in STEM.
- Tribal Colleges and Universities Program (TCUP): this program provides funding to federally recognized Tribal Colleges and Universities, Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, and Alaska Native-Serving Institutions to promote high quality STEM education and research.

These programs have supported hundreds of projects that are training the next generation of minority scientists and researchers, while advancing American innovation in medicine, energy, transportation, engineering, technology, and more. **We urge you to robustly fund these programs and to include the following report language in the FY25 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill to ensure that the National Science Foundation can support expanding research capacity at America's Minority-Serving Institutions:**

The Committee supports NSF's efforts to expand research capacity at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Minority-Serving Institutions. The Committee encourages NSF to fully support these efforts and to align them with the goals and criteria of research capacity-building programs as outlined in Section 10524 of Public Law 117-167.

As American innovation rises to meet the complex challenges of our society, it is critical that the workforce reflects the diverse pool of talent and potential that our nation has to offer.

We appreciate your leadership in prioritizing funding for our Nation's STEM research and education needs and look forward to continuing that work in this year's appropriations process.

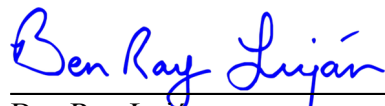
⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 19183.

⁶ *Id.*

Sincerely,



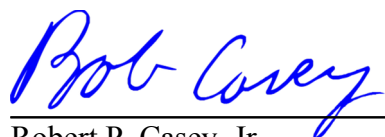
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



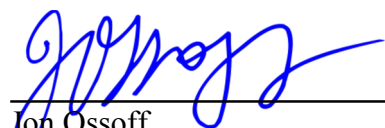
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator