

June 7, 2018

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) 2018 appropriations package. We appreciate your leadership and recognition of the importance of the current organizational structure of EPA and Congress' support for maintaining S&T funding levels, particularly for the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) program.

As you work on the FY 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide \$746 million for EPA S&T. We recognize the difficult choices Congress faces in crafting and enacting appropriations. Additionally, we are firm in our conviction that EPA's research programs and the facilities that administer them are profoundly beneficial to the United States, and that the investment in the agency's S&T programs, especially STAR, are a critical component of our prosperity. For this reason, we urge you to provide robust funding for EPA S&T funding, and to continue your support for STAR and the EPA's National Center for Environmental Research (NCER) as a standalone entity within the agency.

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 and graduate fellowships to 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 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

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>.

- Support for new and advanced research infrastructure.²

The benefits this program has brought to the nation have only been possible through the multitude of STAR grants and fellowships that EPA has released and managed since the program's inception.³ Another key to the program's success has been its management through NCER, which ensures that the grants, contracts, and administrative functions and support of STAR continue.

Alternatively, the administration's FY 2019 budget request proposes to close NCER, shrink its research activities, and consolidate them under a newer, smaller office. This proposal would erode EPA's research capacity and would negatively impact individuals, families and communities throughout the country. We urge you to maintain a strong NCER within the EPA and to seek stakeholder input should you consider any restructuring.

We look forward to working with you further and hope to serve as a resource for you as the FY 2019 appropriations cycle progresses.

Sincerely,

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of American Universities
Carnegie Mellon University
Columbia University
Emory University
Entomological Society of America
Harvard University
Michigan State University
National Association of Marine Laboratories
South Dakota School of Mines & Technology
Stony Brook University
The State University of New York System
University at Buffalo
University of California System
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, Riverside
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of New Hampshire
University of New Mexico
University of Pennsylvania
University of Rochester
University of Washington
Yale University

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>.

³ Between 2003 and 2015, EPA issued 1,394 STAR grants and fellowships.