March 19, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-226, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-255, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Schumer:

As the Washington voices for the research universities, medical schools, and teaching hospitals at the forefront of our nation's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, we are keenly aware of the need to protect our nation's science and engineering workforce, the same workforce that is currently battling COVID-19 and working to protect us from other pandemics. The work of our members is a linchpin of our nation's health and strength, and in order for us to continue our critical missions during these difficult times we ask that Congress consider a few key provisions and supplemental funding to safeguard our nation's research workforce and capabilities.

We have developed a four-point strategy that will allow our members to continue to lead in the battle against COVID-19 and ensure that our other research on behalf of the American people will not suffer during these unprecedented times.

We anticipate significant impacts on research personnel and students and their work but, given the great uncertainties about the duration of the crisis, we cannot comprehensively quantify all the costs at this time. Accordingly, this proposal aims to broadly capture the four key areas of impact where substantial personnel and research-related costs will be incurred or there will be a loss of support due to inactivity.

1. Salary/Benefit support for graduate students, post docs, principal investigators, and other research personnel funded by federal research grants whose labs are closed or severely limited in their operations. Salaries for graduate students, post-doctoral researchers and other laboratory technicians are often fully funded by federal grants. These students and researchers

can only be paid salary from such grants if they are performing duties related to the grants. Once an individual's sick or other leave benefits are exhausted, or leave is unavailable, institutions of higher education face significant challenges in continuing to meet payroll obligations for this important segment of the research and development workforce.

2. Ramp-down and eventual ramp-up of costs to close and restart research activities. This includes a range of things, including but not limited to:
   - loss or necessary destruction of cell cultures and biological samples,
   - disposal of hazardous materials and other environmental and safety costs,
   - care for animals, and in some cases replacement of animal subjects, and
   - restarting experiments that could not be completed due to the closure of research facilities, inability of personnel to interact in the field, or missed seasonal opportunities such as plant or animal life cycles.

3. Ramp-up costs for COVID-19 related-research for such things as supplies, equipment, additional analytic capabilities, etc.

4. Inactivity at core or central research facilities that support federally funded research by way of instrumentation, equipment, computation, analysis, and other research services, and are funded by direct charges to federal research grants for the services researchers perform. While these core research facilities are closed (or in limited operations), the personnel, equipment, and facilities will go unused and unfunded.

These impacts will require principal investigators and their institutions to seek significant supplements to federal research grants and contracts. Anticipating this, we recommend including supplemental funds in the next COVID-19 relief/stimulus bill to address these impacts and sustain the core of our nation's research workforce and capabilities.

Specifically, we recommend:

- Major research agencies with extramural research programs (NIH, NSF, Dept. of Energy Office of Science, Department of Defense Science & Technology programs, NASA, USDA, etc.) should be required to immediately implement policies that provide flexibility for research institutions to cover salaries and benefits for personnel engaged in sponsored activities and cover those costs during the period that the institution is effected by the national health emergency. Additionally, these agencies should be given supplemental appropriations equal to 15 percent of their extramural research budgets for FY2020 to be used to cover requests for research grant/contract supplements due to COVID-19 related impacts.
- The institutions/PIs should use the standard agency process for requesting supplements and agencies should make decisions through their normal agency processes.
- For core facilities, institutions should submit requests for emergency relief to cover personnel costs and base operating costs attributable to facilities closure or limited operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Agencies should exercise discretion in providing relief funds to meet needs

across the country and prioritize relief for facilities that provide services critical to national research goals.

- Any supplemental funds the agencies do not expend for COVID related impacts within the next 12 months should be reprogrammed by the agencies for new awards. (This could have a stimulative effect and help to address the nation's research competitiveness).

Based on estimates from AAAS for FY19, the federal government in total spent approximately $85 billion for basic and applied research. Fifteen (15) percent of this is approximately $13 billion. While imprecise, we recommend this total level of funding to be divided among the major federal research agencies based on the size of their extramural research budgets.

As the associations representing the institutions at the forefront of the battle against this pandemic, we appreciate your consideration of this proposal to reinforce our nation's scientific and medical research enterprise and welcome the opportunity to work with you.

Sincerely,

David Skorton
President and CEO
Association of American Medical Colleges

Mary Sue Coleman
President
Association of American Universities

Peter McPherson
President
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Ted Mitchell
President
American Committee on Education

The AAMC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through innovative medical education, cutting-edge patient care, and groundbreaking medical research. Its members comprise all 155 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems; and more than 80 academic societies. The Association of American Universities (AAU) is an association of 63 U.S. and two Canadian leading research universities that transform lives through education, research, and innovation. AAU member universities collectively help shape policy for higher education, science, and innovation; promote best practices in undergraduate and graduate education and strengthen the contributions of leading research universities to American society. The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is a research, policy, and advocacy organization with a membership of over 200 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, that is dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities. The American Council on Education (ACE) is a membership organization that mobilizes the higher education community to shape effective public policy and foster innovative, high-quality practice. As the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities, our strength lies in our diverse membership of more than 1,700 colleges and universities, related associations, and other organizations.

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