May 15, 2012

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Fattah:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU), representing 59 leading public and private research universities in the United States, I write to express my gratitude to you for your help in successfully steering H.R. 5326, the FY 2013 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, to final passage in the House of Representatives. We truly appreciate your unwavering support for scientific and education programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

For the last 60 years, NSF has supported fundamental research that covers the entire spectrum of science and engineering research. In order for the United States to remain at the forefront in science and technology and globally competitive, robust federal investment in NSF is absolutely essential. Despite constrained budgets, you have shown consistent leadership in support of this investment in basic research. Your strong opposition to amendments to reduce funding for NSF by $1.2 billion and cut funding for political science research is greatly appreciated by the research university community. As you so eloquently stated in your floor statement, “it is important that we understand the political dynamics, radicalization of populations around the world, how political parties operate in the former Soviet Union, and all of the other issues that are being studied. These studies are important. They’re merit based.” We agree and thank you for your opposition to these ill-conceived amendments.

We thank you for your leadership in supporting important research priorities at NSF, such as cyberinfrastructure, cybersecurity, STEM education, and advanced manufacturing. As the House Appropriations Committee report aptly states, “the future economic prosperity in the United States will depend largely on our ability to develop and manufacture new products based on advanced technologies.” America’s research universities are a critical component in the development of cutting-edge approaches and methods which were not previously thought-of, but will lead to the commercial manufacturing of revolutionary technologies and products.

Thank you also for your strong leadership and support of NASA. In order for NASA to remain the world’s premiere space agency, there must be sustained funding for NASA’s science, aeronautics, and space technology programs. Thus, the $5 billion appropriation for NASA Science will allow for the development, and in some instances, the completion of important space science missions and projects. We are grateful for your thoughtful and sound approach to funding for the Mars Exploration program and the critical investments needed to support the scientific recommendations of the National Research Council. We also appreciate the $480 million appropriation for Discovery and New Frontiers class missions. It is important to have a balance between small, medium, and flagship missions, and support for Discovery and New Frontiers missions helps maintain that essential balance. We are also quite appreciative of your support for NASA’s aeronautics and space technology programs. These programs foster the critical capabilities required for success in NASA’s future science and exploration missions, enable a vibrant and competitive U.S. space industry, and forge technology-based partnerships across government agencies.
Again, thank you for your leadership in supporting the important work of the NSF and NASA throughout the FY13 appropriations process. You and your staff are to be commended for your hard work and dedication to the passage of H.R. 5326 in the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Hunter R. Rawlings III  
President  
Association of American Universities