

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 24, 2017

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Shaheen:

We write to thank you for your continued support of funding for the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, which spur innovation and are critical to our nation's economic competitiveness. In order to maintain U.S. scientific and economic leadership, our workforce requires the participation of the best and brightest in every state. To promote this endeavor, we write to express our strong support for robust funding of the National Science Foundation's Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (NSF EPSCoR) and urge you to provide the maximum funding possible for these important programs in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 appropriations bill.

EPSCoR programs are targeted at states and jurisdictions that are historically underserved by federal research and development (R&D) funding, providing them with opportunities to strengthen their research capabilities and to advance technological innovation. EPSCoR's support for science and engineering research is crucial to maintain our competitiveness. The investment over the years has brought innumerable benefits to researchers, students, and communities around the nation.

EPSCoR has many proven benefits. Two recent studies - one from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and one from the Science and Technology Policy Institute (STPI) - reaffirmed the importance of a national research community and the need for the United States to develop its talent and expertise. These reports also recognized EPSCoR as the main federal program to reduce the geographic imbalance in federal research funding and improve research infrastructure and capacity throughout the states. The two studies further concluded that EPSCoR had strengthened the national research infrastructure, provided new educational opportunities, and enhanced the science and engineering workforce.

Students in all parts of the country must have access to high-quality research opportunities. However, EPSCoR is still confronted by a geographical imbalance in its research funding. Today, 25 states and three jurisdictions account for less than 12 percent of all NSF funding. These include Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Yet, these states are home to many talented scientists and engineers.

Your continued support of EPSCoR initiatives will continue to bolster the ability of EPSCoR states to compete and provide benefit to all taxpayers by increasing the national research capacity, training the skilled workforce of the future, and encouraging long-term economic growth.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to ensure that robust STEM and research capabilities are available in every EPSCoR state.

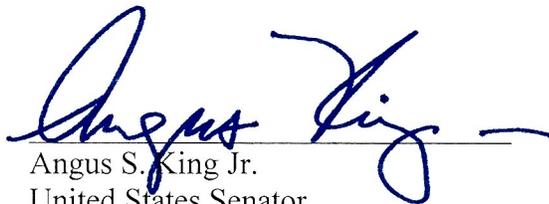
Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



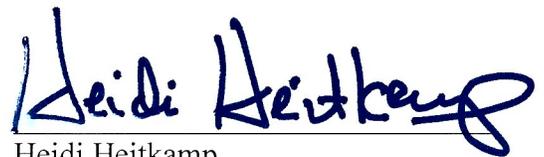
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



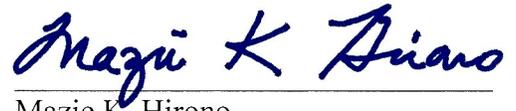
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator