

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 2, 2015

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-142
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Hart Senate Office Building, SH-125
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski:

Thank you for your continued support of investments in research and development (R&D) as well as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, which are critical to our nation's economic competitiveness. Maintaining U.S. scientific and economic leadership, however, requires the participation of the best and brightest in every state. To further that goal, we are writing to express our strong support for robust funding of the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR).

First established at the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1979, EPSCoR and EPSCoR-like programs now exist at five agencies including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). These programs are targeted at states and jurisdictions that are historically underserved by federal R&D funding, providing them with opportunities to strengthen their research capabilities and to advance technological innovation.

EPSCoR has 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. Today, half the states and three jurisdictions account for only about 10 percent of all NSF funding. These states include: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam.

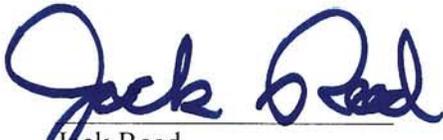
After agreeing that students in all parts of the country must have access to high-quality research opportunities, the Academies further concluded that EPSCoR had strengthened the national research infrastructure, provided new educational opportunities, and enhanced the science and

engineering workforce. In FY 2014, STEM outreach efforts supported by NSF EPSCoR alone reached nearly 4,000 teachers and over 70,000 K-12 students. Additionally, many EPSCoR states have developed customized, economically relevant, science and technology plans and sought improved private sector partnerships. These successes are crucial to supporting U.S. competitiveness in a high-tech global market.

The FY 2016 EPSCoR appropriation can build on these successes. As such, we request your support for at least \$170 million in NSF EPSCoR funding, which is consistent with the FY 2016 budget request, and no less than \$18 million in NASA EPSCoR funding, which is consistent with the FY 2015 appropriation. Your continued support of these EPSCoR initiatives will continue strengthening the ability of EPSCoR states to compete while benefitting 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 strong research infrastructure is available in states across the nation.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



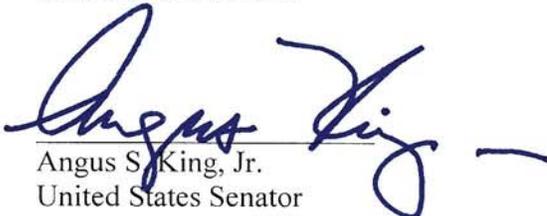
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
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Thomas R. Carper
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