The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The undersigned organizations sincerely appreciate the bipartisan leadership and commitment you demonstrated by achieving -- despite formidable challenges -- final FY20 appropriations legislation that was signed into law in December 2019.

As the new decade begins and the FY21 appropriations process launches, we believe it is imperative that you again accomplish appropriations objectives that bear directly on the wellbeing of Americans today and tomorrow. Specifically, we urge you to:

- Make adjustments to topline funding levels as needed to address major funding needs that were not factored into the 2019 Bipartisan Budget Act.

- Treat timely completion of the FY21 appropriations process as an immutable priority, establishing FY21 funding levels with time to spare before FY20 funding ends on 9/30/20.

- Boost science agency investment significantly, affirming and advancing our nation’s global leadership in the R&D arena.

The 2019 Bipartisan Budget Act empowered Congress to avoid deep, counter-strategic budget cuts and make strategic investments in both the defense and non-defense arenas in FY20 and FY21; however, to avoid arbitrary, damaging cuts in FY21 and permit strategic investment, the topline spending level for non-defense discretionary funding must be adjusted upward to accommodate major, unplanned-for spending. Adjusting topline spending for NDD agencies and programs would not signal a change in direction; it would permit Congress to stay on course.

As you know from both history and experience, completing the annual appropriations process is particularly challenging in an election year. The uphill climb to final legislation becomes steeper with every day that passes, and the process could easily grind to a halt as post-primary races kick into high gear over the summer months. Our nation cannot wait for ideal circumstances before
taking action to stop the vicious cycle of protracted appropriations processes that place increasing distance between timely and actual funding.

Finishing the FY21 appropriations process in ample time to create a smooth transition between FY20 and FY21 funding will prevent the costly inefficiency and wasted time that stop-gap funding under a continuing resolution (CR) engenders. CRs freeze federal agencies in time, turning a blind eye to evolving needs and priorities and locking in spending regardless of current utility.

The American people deserve better.

Americans also deserve a federal budget that confronts both current and future threats to the economic, health and national security interests of our nation. The US has historically invested in science and technology (S&T) in service to both the short- and long-term interests of the American people; today, however, competitor nations are investing in S&T with a vigor that far surpasses our own. If the US takes our scientific capabilities, output and leadership for granted, we are gambling with the future of our nation and the wellbeing of our children.

For these reasons, we urge you to treat timely FY21 funding and boosted funding for federal science agencies as a dual imperative. Our nation has witnessed your ability to overcome daunting challenges as you steward the federal appropriations process. We are grateful to you and your respective staff members for your commitment and diligence, and thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Organizational Signatories

CC The Honorable Richard Shelby
The Honorable Nita Lowey
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
The Honorable Kay Granger