



June 24, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee

Dear Appropriations Leaders:

On behalf of the Student Association for STEM Advocacy, thank you for your leadership in enacting final FY2024 appropriations bills. While we appreciate an agreement to keep the government funded for the fiscal year, we are disappointed in cuts to a range of funding streams critical to STEM education and workforce development in these fields at a time when our nation faces critical labor shortages, declining academic achievement, and significant technology and competitiveness threats.

The CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 authorized many programs that could allow for vital teacher training and collaboration with the scientific workforce, improved STEM education in afterschool programs, and a dedicated focus to diversify STEM fields. The legislation signaled a call to ramp-up the nation's investments in STEM education and workforce development programs, and to date, Congress has not fulfilled those obligations. As attention now turns to the FY2025 appropriations process, we ask that the Committee reject any further cuts and increase funding for long-standing STEM education and workforce priorities.

We urge Congress to increase funding for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program under Title IV-A in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). With this grant, states and districts have the flexibility to provide well-rounded education programs, including robotics and STEM, to our most at-risk students. They will have access to new, high-quality STEM courses and resources, critical STEM opportunities both inside and outside the classroom for activities like STEM and robotics competitions, hands-on and field-based learning opportunities, increased access to Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, and more computer science courses.

We also request Congress to increase funding levels for ESSA Title IV-B, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). Increasing funding for high-quality STEM programming in afterschool and summer learning programs via Title IV-B offers complementary learning opportunities for students and additional support for teachers. 21st CCLC increases engagement in school and reduces chronic absenteeism while providing hands-on, academically enriching learning experiences and programs that focus on subjects like STEM, physical fitness, drug and violence prevention, and service learning.



Increased funding for Career and Technical Education State Grants will also allow educators to provide more STEM-focused strategies in apprenticeships, work-based learning, and dual-enrollment credits as state and local CTE providers explore pathways to high-needs fields, which allows for more allowable uses of funding for STEM education activities. This was another program with a net cut in the final FY2024 bill.

Additionally, we respectfully request that the National Science Foundation (NSF) receive at least \$11.9 billion in funding, including a robust appropriation for the National Science Foundation's STEM Education Directorate and its Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) Program. The directorate plays a critical role in expanding the STEM education knowledge base for broadened participation, graduate and undergraduate innovation and fellowships, enabling a skilled technical workforce, informal and afterschool education, and student experiences in STEM careers. AISL supports research on the design, development, and impact of STEM learning opportunities and experiences in information educational environments. With the enactment of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, a robust appropriation for NSF is essential and we urge Congress to sustain the momentum of the CHIPS and Science Act and fund as many of these newly authorized STEM education programs as possible.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our views and we look forward to working with you and your staff closely during this appropriations process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Hyer", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Steve Hyer
Founder and Chief Advocacy Officer
Student Association for STEM Advocacy

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frank Ferrari", with a stylized, cursive script.

Frank Ferrari
Founder and President
Student Association for STEM Advocacy

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jonah Sementkowski", with a stylized, cursive script.

Jonah Sementkowski
Secretary
Student Association for STEM Advocacy