

May 4, 2021

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chair
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Lucas, Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2405 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Haley Stevens, Chair
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
1510 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Waltz, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
213 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Johnson, Ranking Member Lucas, Chairwoman Stevens, and Ranking Member Waltz,

On behalf of the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC), we are writing in support of the National Science Foundation (NSF) for the Future Act and to thank you for your leadership in drafting this legislation with the broad and inclusive input of the communities who work with NSF. We applaud your commitment to increasing funding for scientific research, broadening participation in science, and strengthening STEM education and workforce training.

We would like to especially thank you for including such clear language on the importance of public engagement with science in the National Science Foundation for the Future Act and commend you for including provisions that will help ensure all Americans can learn about, participate in, contribute to, and benefit from the science and technology that NSF funds.

ASTC is the membership organization for science and technology centers and museums in all 50 states and in nearly 50 countries around the world, all committed to increasing understanding of—and engagement with—science and technology among all people. In an average year, our network of nearly 700 science centers and museums, and allied organizations, serve more than 110 million visitors annually, including over 75 million in the United States.

In addition to serving as institutions that regularly engage the public in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, our community works to advance lifelong science learning, connect science and society, engage diverse audiences, and partner to solve local and global challenges. Among the most trusted organizations in their communities, ASTC members—and other organizations committed to public engagement with science—are increasingly serving as conveners and catalysts for their community to come together to address local, national, and global priorities.

We especially appreciate the importance of grounding the work of the proposed new NSF Directorate for Science and Engineering Solutions in robust connections with the public, including the establishment of formal avenues for public input; deep consideration of ethical, legal, and societal issues in setting the

priorities for the Directorate; and the development of innovative approaches to connect research with societal outcomes and education and training for students and researchers on engaging with the public.

ASTC is grateful for your efforts to ensure that the Broader Impacts review criterion is meeting its objectives across the Foundation, including the opportunity to enhance training on these issues for merit review panelists and NSF program officers, establish clearinghouses for sharing best practices, and develop tools for evaluating and documenting the societal impacts of research.

We also appreciate the clear language on the need to provide support for developing effective strategies for public and community engagement in all stages of the research and development process, research on the development and implementations of effective social strategies and tools for mitigating and adapting to climate change, and the training current and future climate change researchers on the importance of community engagement and science communication. Finally, we are grateful for the bill language stressing the need to incorporate ethical, social, safety, and security issues into the research design and review process across the Foundation.

ASTC and our community of organizations committed to public engagement with science stands ready to work with the Committee to advance this important work.

Sincerely,



Christofer Nelson
President and CEO
Association of Science and Technology Centers

cc: Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi
Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
House Science, Space, and Technology Committee staff

Founded in 1973, ASTC is a network of nearly 700 science and technology centers and museums, and allied organizations, engaging more than 110 million people annually across North America and in almost 50 countries. With its members and partners, ASTC works towards a vision of increased understanding of—and engagement with—science and technology among all people. www.astc.org

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