August 13, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leaders McConnell, McCarthy, and Schumer:

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), a coalition of 29 biological and biomedical societies collectively representing over 130,000 individual scientists and engineers, commends Congress for working in a bipartisan manner earlier this year to address the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. As you continue negotiations on another bill to provide additional funding for federal agencies, we urge you to finalize an agreement that provides at least $15.5 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as proposed in the Health Education and Liability Protection and Schools (HEALS) Act. In addition, it is essential that the next COVID package include supplemental resources for the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, investments in the biological sciences are more critical than ever to respond to the current crisis, prevent future outbreaks, and develop new treatments. NIH has already made important contributions to our understanding of coronavirus. Researchers funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) found that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, can be detected in aerosols and on surfaces for longer periods of time than previously expected, providing critical information to help prevent infection. NIH is also supporting a public-private partnership to rapidly develop a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine.

Funds included in the coronavirus package passed by Congress in March allowed NSF to expand its Rapid Response Research (RAPID) grant program that supports near real-time research at the cellular, physiological, and ecological levels to better understand the spread of COVID-19. Since March, NSF has received thousands of inquiries for research support via RAPID. With additional supplemental funding, NSF could enable broader-scope projects that build on the knowledge already acquired and sustain greater collaboration and coordination activities.

Scientific discovery and the reliance on scientific data have provided the foundation for tremendous technological and societal advances in the US before and during the current pandemic. It is critical that Congress provide another infusion of funds for NIH and NSF to continue the development of vaccines and therapies, resume research that was interrupted due to lab closures, and support early career researchers who have been especially impacted by COVID-related disruptions.
Sincerely,

Louis B. Justement, PhD  
FASEB President