

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 19, 2026

Director Michael Kratsios
Office of Science and Technology Policy
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. David Sacks
Special Advisor for AI and Crypto
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Director Kratsios and Chairman Sacks,

As Members of Congress tasked with oversight of federal science and technology initiatives, we write to emphasize the importance of supporting sustained federal investment in STEM education, research and development (R&D). The federal government plays a critical role in advancing technological innovation within both the public and private sector, creating pathways for applications like artificial intelligence and quantum computers to thrive. Serving as the bedrock for national innovation, federal R&D expenditures have driven U.S. scientific and technological superiority, supporting the development of pioneering technologies, including the Chip-Scale Atomic Clock, and by shaping the digital infrastructure that emerged from the Space Race. This sustained federal funding has also catalyzed the growth of major innovation hubs such as Silicon Valley and the Research Triangle Park.

However, the President's FY2026 budget proposal falls short of what is necessary to maintain U.S. leadership in the global digital and scientific landscape. Meanwhile, the President's re-chartered Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) has not articulated or undertaken any public efforts to preserve or advance this leadership. Despite the re-establishment of the PCAST, there are no recent public records documenting PCAST's progress or current membership during this Congress.¹ The most recent materials available on the Office of Science and Technology Policy's website date back to 2021.² Moreover, PCAST is not referenced once in the Trump Administration's 2025 Science and Technology Highlights, suggesting a lack of

¹ The White House, *Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Launches PCAST to Restore American Leadership in Science and Technology*, The White House, January 23, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/01/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-launches-pcast-to-restore-american-leadership-in-science-and-technology/>

² President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, *Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Program Review: A Report to the President of the United States of American and the U.S. Congress*, U.S. Department of Energy, January 2021. https://science.osti.gov/-/media/About/pdf/organization/pcast/202012/FINAL_PCAST-NITRD-Report_2021.pdf

substantive action.³ At the same time, the proposed elimination of STEM education and R&D programs threatens the historic achievements of U.S. science and technology leadership while simultaneously jeopardizing our nation's economic prosperity and global standing. It is our responsibility as Members of Congress to ensure that as these paradigm-shifting technologies emerge, we preserve our national competitiveness in the sciences and technology, **supporting sustained and long-term federal investment in STEM education and research**. To that end, **we request that you provide a formal report of PCAST's plans and updates in advancing our scientific and technological innovation**.

Historically, PCAST has served to provide expert policy guidance for the administration to forward the U.S.'s leadership in scientific and technological innovation, convening both public and private sector expertise. Rather than articulating its science and technology vision, the President's FY2026 Discretionary Budget Proposal sought to decrease total federal R&D funding by 22 percent from FY2025 continuing resolution levels.⁴ The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institute of Health (NIH), and Department of Energy (DOE) faced severe cutbacks – all of whom would have experienced at least a 20 percent reduction in federal funding.⁵ Under this budget request, the Department of Defense (DOD) would have also faced a 9.5 percent downsizing in its overall funding.⁶ Similarly, the President's FY2026 budget proposed cutting funding for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) by 43 percent, significantly reducing research services and laboratory programs.⁷ On a bipartisan basis, the President's FY2026 Budget Request has been rejected as its proposals conflict with congressional priorities. House and Senate Appropriations levels rejected the President's drastic cuts to critical agency funding in the bipartisan spending package that passed both chambers earlier last month.⁸ Still, these agencies will not receive the funding levels necessary to maintain U.S. competitiveness in scientific and technological innovation.

According to the 2021 National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence Final Report (NSCAI), federal artificial intelligence (AI) R&D funding should have doubled annually to reach \$32 billion by FY2026 to support advanced research and fill areas beyond the reach of private

³ Office of Science and Technology Policy, *Trump Administration Science & Technology Highlights: Year One*, The White House, January 2026. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/WHOSTP-2025-Wins.pdf>

⁴ Vought, Russel T., *Fiscal Year 2026 Discretionary Budget Request*, Executive Office of the President Office of Management and Budget, May 2, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Fiscal-Year-2026-Discretionary-Budget-Request.pdf>

⁵ Borges, Chris, *Innovation Lightbulb: Visualizing Proposed Cuts to Federal R&D Funding*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, July 17, 2025. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/innovation-lightbulb-visualizing-proposed-cuts-federal-rd-funding>

⁶ Zimmerman, Alessandra, *FY2026 R&D Appropriations: Federal R&D Estimates*, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), July 15, 2025. https://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/R%26D%20Estimates%20Report%202026_1.pdf

⁷ Hamill, Colin, *The FY2026 President's Budget Request: DOE Office of Science and NIST Details*, American Astronomical Society (AAS), July 14, 2025. <https://aas.org/posts/news/2025/07/fy2026-presidents-budget-request-doe-office-science-and-nist-details>

⁸ U.S. House Committee on Appropriations, *DeLauro, Meng, Kaptur and Pingree Applaud Passage of Appropriations Package*, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations, January 8, 2026. <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/delauro-meng-kaptur-and-pingree-applaud-passage-appropriations-package>

investment. Yet, these same agencies now face the steepest projected reductions.⁹ Instead, U.S. fiscal spending on AI over the past five years has fallen short, totaling only \$3.3 billion – roughly one-tenth of NSCAI recommendations.¹⁰ The NSCAI report also acknowledged that the admirable work of NSF and other government agencies cannot produce a strategic effect in scaling AI innovation when challenged with overall declines in federal R&D investment.¹¹ Furthermore, FY2026 appropriations for the NSF, NIH, NASA, NIST, and DOE, failed to meet the levels authorized by the CHIPS and Science Act.¹² Sustaining global competitiveness requires robust public-private partnerships in AI development; narrowing government-funded AI R&D risks isolating the research ecosystem.¹³ With future AI models projected to cost more than \$1 billion by 2027, maintaining robust federal support in foundational STEM research is vital to accelerate progress across the next generation of AI and continue producing cutting-edge applications.¹⁴

Reducing non-defense R&D underestimates the impact such research has had on strengthening our national security technologies and STEM capabilities, as well as minimizes investment into private R&D. Rather than competing with the private sector, public R&D serves as a complement to private R&D, broadening the pool of information that companies can draw on to elevate their products and development.¹⁵ Across all U.S. patents granted, nearly one-third of total U.S. patents relied on federally funded science.¹⁶ Small and medium-sized enterprises raised approximately \$28 billion in private investments between 2014-2023 thanks to government-funded awards through the NSF America’s Seed Fund.¹⁷ The NSF-led National AI Research Institutes program, Quantum Leap Challenge Institutes, and Regional Innovation Engines program also help foster a robust STEM workforce and facilitate research projects that private-sector companies might not otherwise have the capabilities to perform.¹⁸ Similarly, the proposed

⁹ National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, *NSCAI Final Report, Pages 183-196*, National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, March 2021. <https://reports.nsc.ai.gov/final-report/>

¹⁰ Borges, Chris and Deng, Yutong, *Innovation Lightbulb: Federal R&D Funding Matters for U.S. AI Leadership*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, October 22, 2025. <https://www.csis.org/blogs/innovation-lightbulb-federal-rd-funding-matters-us-ai-leadership>

¹¹ See Footnote 9

¹² Hourihan, Matt and Gordon, Andy, *CHIPS and Science Funding Gaps to Continue to Stifle Scientific Competitiveness*, Federation of American Scientists, April 8, 2024. <https://fas.org/publication/chips-funding-gaps-april/>

¹³ Bipartisan House Task Force on Artificial Intelligence, *Leading AI Progress: Policy Insights and a U.S. Vision for AI Adoption, Responsible Innovation, and Governance*, U.S. House of Representatives, December 2024. <https://www.speaker.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/AI-Task-Force-Report-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁴ Stewart, Nyah, *Fueling Innovation: Insights into Federal AI R&D Investment*, Special Competitive Studies Project, September 2024. https://www.scsf.ai/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2.0_-AI-RD-White-Paper.pdf

¹⁵ Atkinson, Robert D., *Debunking the Myth that Federal R&D Investment “Crowds Out” Private R&D*, Information Technology & Innovation Foundation, August 25, 2020. <https://itif.org/publications/2020/08/25/debunking-myth-federal-rd-investment-crowds-out-private-rd/>

¹⁶ Fleming, L.; Greene, H.; Li, G.; Marx, M.; Yao, D., *Government-Funded Research Increasingly Fuels Innovation*, *Science*:1139–1141, Policy Forum, June 21, 2019. <https://par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10101180#:~:text=Here%2C%20we%20detail%20individual%20bibliometric,%2C%20and%20entrepre%2D%20neurial%20success.>

¹⁷ National Science Foundation, *NSF Boosts Funding Amounts for SBIR/STTR Phase I and Phase II Programs to Better Support the Nation’s Innovation and Entrepreneurship Community*, National Science Foundation, June 17, 2024. <https://www.nsf.gov/tip/updates/nsf-boosts-funding-amounts-sbirstr-entrepreneurship-innovation>

¹⁸ Bates, Jason, *NSF 2024: Investing in the Nation’s Scientific and Competitive Future*, National Science Foundation, December 18, 2024. <https://www.nsf.gov/science-matters/nsf-2024-investing-nations-scientific->

radical restructuring of the NIH's budget would limit advancements in critical biomedical research. NIH research funding has been a proxy contributor to generating economic growth, driving in nearly \$94.58 billion in new economic activity and 407,782 jobs in 2024 alone. This translates to \$2.56 of economic output for every \$1 of federal research investment.¹⁹ Alongside funding basic scientific research and reimagining medical innovation, studies indicate that for each NIH-funded grant, two to three private-sector patents are expected to generate.²⁰ Additionally, every \$1 dollar in NIH funding generates approximately \$1.40 in private-sector pharmaceutical drug sales.²¹

Furthermore, NASA R&D has notably paved the way for U.S. leadership in space exploration and technological development, especially for private companies. From collaborating with Blue Origin on maturing lunar lander systems to providing data inputs to inform SpaceX's Starship Human Landing System, NASA R&D has enabled the commercial space industry to innovate and thrive.²² In addition, federal funding for NASA has proven to have significant economic benefits, supporting 305,000 jobs and contributing \$75.6 billion of economic output in FY2023.²³ Likewise, the Department of Energy has a long-standing history of leveraging public-private partnerships to pioneer and commercialize ground-breaking technologies. As the world's largest funder of physical science and applied energy research, DOE R&D has transformed American energy dominance by enabling improvements in hydraulic fracturing, microseismic imaging, and drilling technologies.²⁴ Moreover, the DOE's seventeen National Laboratories have revolutionized U.S. scientific discovery, facilitating the development of supercomputing, nuclear imaging, metal-processing technologies, and other innovations that have been crucial to private-sector advancement.²⁵

Cybersecurity innovation has depended heavily on federal R&D funding, particularly from both the DOD and NIST. DOD R&D investment during the Cold War shaped U.S. technological superiority in national security, driving breakthroughs in nuclear and aerospace technology. Silicon Valley and venture capital markets owe their early growth to large-scale defense R&D spending during the 1950-1960s, birthing U.S. electronic intelligence and ensuring global technological dominance.²⁶ NIST's National Cybersecurity Center of Excellence currently leverages this funding to establish public-private partnerships, fostering collaboration amongst

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¹⁹ United for Medical Research, *NIH's Role in Sustaining the U.S. Economy: Powering Local Economies and American Leadership*, United for Medical Research, March 2025. https://www.unitedformedicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/UMR_NIH-Role-in-Sustaining-US-Economy-FY2024-2025-Update.pdf

²⁰ Azoulay, Pierre; Graff Zivin, Joshua S.; Li, Danielle; Sampat, Bhaven N., *Public R&D Investments and Private-sector Patenting: Evidence from NIH Funding Rules*, National Bureau of Economic Research, January 2015. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w20889/w20889.pdf

²¹ See Footnote 20

²² Hall, Loura, *NASA Releases Opportunity to Boost Commercial Space Tech Development*, NASA, July 30, 2025. <https://www.nasa.gov/directorates/stmd/nasa-releases-opportunity-to-boost-commercial-space-tech-development/>

²³ European Space Agency (ESA), *NASA Economic Impact Report 2024*, European Space Agency, October 2024. <https://space-economy.esa.int/article/216/nasa-economic-impact-report-2024>

²⁴ Harrell, Jeremy, *An Innovation Agenda for the Department of Energy*, American Affairs Journal, Fall 2024. <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2024/08/an-innovation-agenda-for-the-department-of-energy/>

²⁵ U.S. Department of Energy, *75 Breakthroughs by America's National Laboratories*, U.S. Department of Energy, February 14, 2018. <https://www.energy.gov/articles/75-breakthroughs-americas-national-laboratories-0>

²⁶ Bracken, Paul, *How Has the Pentagon Shaped Innovation?*, Yale Insights, Yale School of Management, February 2, 2015. <https://insights.som.yale.edu/insights/how-has-the-pentagon-shaped-innovation>

government, academia, and industry leaders to strengthen U.S. leadership in national security.²⁷ Alongside developing foundational cybersecurity best practices and standards, including the NIST Cybersecurity Framework, Post-Quantum Cryptography, and the Advanced Encryption Standard, NIST R&D funding has awarded more than \$3 million towards educational and community organizations to enhance our nation’s cybersecurity workforce in conjunction with its National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE).²⁸

Many of today’s transformative technologies could not have been possible without early-stage support from public R&D. Funded by the NSF’s Digital Libraries Initiative, the founders of Google were able to develop the prototype for its core search algorithm, “PageRank”.²⁹ Smartphone touchscreen technology that we see today stems from the NSF funding of University of Delaware researchers and founders of Fingerworks, which would later be acquired by Apple and lay the foundation for our everyday devices.³⁰ The Department of Energy’s \$465 million loan was instrumental in propelling Tesla Motors to transitioning from an emerging vehicle startup into the automotive powerhouse it is today.³¹ Federally-funded research institutions have also been essential in expanding private-sector resources and broadening the talent pool of our STEM workforce. In collaboration with NSF, the Washington-state Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence’s initiatives with private partners like NVIDIA fuel scientific research for multimodal AI models.³² With two NSF-funded AI Institutes – the Duke University-led Athena Institute and AI Institute for Engaged Learning – and the first-of-its-kind HBCU Institute for Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Research, North Carolina’s Research Triangle Park is also generating strong investment in AI-driven technologies. These initiatives attract large-scale investment from industry leaders, including Apple, which announced plans for a new engineering hub in the region.³³

Suffice it to say, federal investment in STEM education, research and development is key to accelerating our national research infrastructure, cultivating and retaining STEM talent, building an AI-capable workforce, as well as enhancing our cybersecurity mechanisms. However, major

²⁷ Steffaro, Alexis, *Industry Coalition Urges Commerce Secretary Lutnick to Prioritize Funding NIST Cyber Efforts*, Center for Cybersecurity Policy and Law, March 10, 2025. <https://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/insights-and-research/industry-coalition-urges-commerce-secretary-lutnick-to-prioritize-funding-nist-cyber-efforts#:~:text=As%20the%20government%20seeks%20opportunities,federal%20communications%20and%20identity%20systems>.

²⁸ National Institute of Standards and Technology, *NIST Awards More Than \$3 Million to Support Cybersecurity Workforce Development Across 13 States*, U.S. Department of Commerce, September 17, 2025. <https://www.nist.gov/news-events/news/2025/09/nist-awards-more-3-million-support-cybersecurity-workforce-development>

²⁹ National Science Foundation, *On the Origins of Google*, National Science Foundation, August 17, 2004. <https://www.nsf.gov/news/origins-google>

³⁰ Association of American Universities, *University Research Made Your Smartphone Smart*. Association of American Universities, September 19, 2017. <https://www.aau.edu/university-research-made-your-smartphone-smart>

³¹ U.S. Department of Energy Office of Energy Dominance Financing, *TESLA*, U.S. Department of Energy. <https://www.energy.gov/lpo/tesla>

³² National Science Foundation, *NSF and NVIDIA partnership enables Ai2 to develop fully open AI models to fuel U.S. scientific innovation*. National Science Foundation, August 14, 2025. <https://www.nsf.gov/news/nsf-nvidia-partnership-enables-ai2-develop-fully-open-ai>

³³ Johnson, Anna; Stradling, Richard; Dukes, Tyler, *NC Finally Lands Apple Campus, Bringing \$1 Billion and 3,000 Jobs to the State*, The News&Observer, August 2, 2021. <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/business/article250934144.html>

funding cuts to the agencies that support these programs will erode our scientific progress and integrity, leaving us to fall behind other competing nations. When federal R&D funding is reduced, it slows the pace of innovation and narrows our ability to expand U.S. leadership.

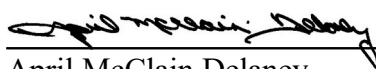
As Congress begins to consider FY2027 appropriations, support for robust and increased government-funded STEM education and R&D is paramount in ensuring the U.S. continues to lead the next wave of groundbreaking technological breakthroughs. Given the lack of action undertaken by PCAST, we request that you provide a formal report of PCAST's current membership, initiatives, and projected meeting schedule, in addition to any achievements made in the past year. Furthermore, we request your official support and commitment to strengthening federal STEM education and R&D funding. We cannot afford to curtail our own growth and innovation by underfunding essential research and development programs.

We appreciate your full and fair consideration of this matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress




Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



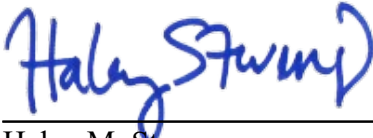
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



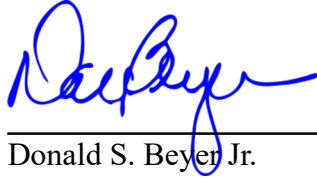
Luz M. Rivas
Member of Congress



Cleo Fields
Member of Congress



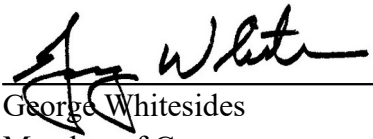
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



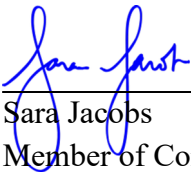
George Whitesides
Member of Congress



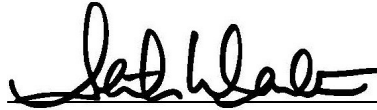
Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



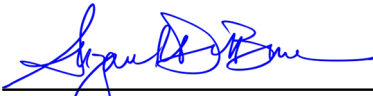
Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress




Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Josh Riley
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress