

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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April 1, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-307, The Capitol  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey,

As the Chairwoman of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee I am writing to encourage your continued support of our nation's science and technology enterprise at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) is responsible for impartial and thorough environmental science that provides a foundation for many of the Agency's regulatory decisions. The research directives of ORD play a specific role in our nation's scientific research enterprise that is not met by any other federal agency, which is why it is critical that it receive adequate funding to continue the cutting edge research that helps further EPA's mission.

The issue of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination requires a national response. We must support the EPA, our nation's lead agency tasked with protecting public health and the environment, in dealing with this issue through increased funding for research efforts. ORD is comprised of six research programs in Air and Energy, Chemical Safety for Sustainability, Human Health Risk Assessment, Homeland Security, Safe and Sustainable Water Resources, and Sustainable and Healthy Communities, which are responsible for conducting much of the fundamental, and impartial, scientific research used to develop environmental protections. That is why I cannot support the cuts to EPA ORD as laid out by the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Budget Request. At a bare minimum the funding for EPA's science and research programs should be maintained at the FY 2018 enacted levels of \$492.5 million to continue the EPA's legacy in scientifically sound environmental protection, but I urge you to support across the board increases at ORD to address new pressing environmental concerns, such as PFAS contamination.

The EPA's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) program develops thorough human health toxicity values that are not replicated by any other chemical assessment program within the federal government. They are a vital resource for both program and regional offices within the

EPA, and external stakeholders, such as impacted community groups and state and local regulatory agencies, to protecting human health. There is a proven need for IRIS assessments, and I request that this program remain within ORD and that the funding be retained at the FY2017 enacted levels.

This Administration has repeatedly sought to eliminate EPA's Science to Achieve Results, or STAR program. The STAR program supports extramural environmental research across ORD's research programs that is not replicated at any other federal agency, with nearly 1,900 graduate students funded through STAR fellowships since 1995.<sup>1</sup> Terminating this program would take away opportunities for the best and brightest environmental scientists and engineers, as well as anthropologists and social scientists, to tackle important environmental problems in concert with EPA's intramural research, and would have a chilling effect on the next generation of environmental protection efforts. I respectfully request that you maintain the funding for the STAR program across ORD's research programs.

Climate change is the most serious environmental challenge in human history, but the proposed reduction of \$17.2 million for climate change research within ORD's Air and Energy Research program puts us at a disadvantage in arming ourselves to deal with a rapidly changing climate. Recent efforts by the EPA to rename the Air, Climate and Energy Research Program to the Air and Energy Research Program, further devalues the importance of climate change focused research. Poor air quality is estimated to be responsible for 200,000 premature deaths each year across this country.<sup>2</sup> Eliminating \$31 million for air quality research from the Air and Energy Research Program signals that, despite overwhelming evidence that air pollution is harmful to human health, the EPA will be hamstrung in its efforts to better understand the impacts of air pollution and help develop regulations that are most protective of human health based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. I strongly encourage an increase in funding for the Air and Energy research program in line with the FY 2018 enacted levels to ensure EPA can continue to meet the critical air quality and climate research needs to protect the public.

I also strongly support sustained funding for the wide range of activities within the Safe and Sustainable Water Resources program, Sustainable Communities program, Chemical Safety and Sustainability program, Human Health Risk Assessment program, and the Homeland Security program. These programs support many critical research initiatives that are utilized to protect public health and arbitrary cuts to these budgets to 'streamline funding and research efforts' are unconscionable.

The EPA has been a global leader in environmental protection for decades. It is time once again to show the world that the EPA, through cutting edge research, continues to develop solutions to our most pressing environmental problems. Given the ubiquitous presence of new chemicals in our everyday lives, it is imperative that we increase the funding for EPA research that would help better understand the effects of chemical exposures rather than gutting ORD. The current PFAS crisis is a prime example of this need for additional R&D funding at the EPA, not less. We have come a long way since the EPA was created nearly 50 years ago, but environmental


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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/research-fellowships/science-achieve-results-star-graduate-fellowships>

<sup>2</sup> Chu, Jennifer. Study: Air Pollution causes 200,000 early deaths each year in the U.S. MIT News Office. August 29, 2013. <http://news.mit.edu/2013/study-air-pollution-causes-200000-early-deaths-each-year-in-the-us-0829>

protection work should not cease simply because we cannot see the pollution around us. We must continue to move forward with scientific and technological advances in the environmental field that have made this country a global leader in protecting the health of its citizens, and our ecosystems, during a time of unparalleled economic growth. I urge you to provide increased funding to EPA's Office of Research and Development to ensure America remains a champion in environmental protection.

Sincerely,



Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

cc:

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Frank Lucas  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations