



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON **SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Full Committee Hearing:

“An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Science Foundation for FY2024”

April 26, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Lucas, for holding today’s hearing. And Dr. Panchanathan and Dr. Reed, thank you both for being here.

Last year, the Science Committee led in the development and enactment of the landmark CHIPS and Science Act, which revitalized our nation’s commitment to science. I am encouraged by the President’s budget request, which seeks to carry out these critical investments. But I will remind my colleagues that funding for the “Science” part of the CHIPS and Science Act has not yet been appropriated. In the face of global competition and major societal challenges that can be addressed through our science and technology enterprise, we must follow through on these investments. We cannot resort to cutting scientific funding to meet arbitrary spending goals.

One of our nation’s premier science agencies is the National Science Foundation. NSF has a truly astounding record of achievement for more than 70 years. But the global context is evolving, and the agency, under the leadership of our esteemed witnesses, is evolving with it.

The CHIPS and Science legislation included a comprehensive reauthorization of NSF. To help the agency meet the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century, the law also created the first-of-its-kind Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships, or “TIP” Directorate. The TIP Directorate builds upon the investments of the other research directorates by supporting new kinds of partnerships and promoting use-inspired and translational research at a larger scale.

TIP presents an opportunity for NSF to think differently about what kinds of partnerships will help further its mission, not just to promote the progress of science, but also – as is written into the agency’s mission statement - to promote the national health, welfare, prosperity, and defense. Strengthening and expanding industry partnerships is essential. So is engaging nontraditional stakeholders and diverse voices in NSF research.

NSF also has some management challenges I hope to discuss today. NSF has a long history of sustained investment in major scientific research facilities that enable breakthrough discoveries. Today, NSF faces enormous pressure as multiple scientific disciplines have concurrently prioritized investments in major new facilities, and operations budgets for increasingly sophisticated facilities threaten research budgets.

This issue is particularly apparent in astronomy. The most recent decadal survey in astronomy and astrophysics recommended that NSF invest in several new major research facilities, with the highest priority given to the US-Extremely Large Telescope Program. There is also a new Antarctic Research

Vessel waiting for approval. I would like to better understand how the agency plans to balance these lofty priorities and strengthen lifecycle planning to account for ever-increasing operations budgets.

Yet another management challenge that we will discuss further today is ensuring that the research environment is safe and free of harassment. While NSF has been a leader in promoting safe environments on university campuses, further steps are needed to protect women and gender minorities in remote research environments. This is particularly so for the U.S. Antarctic Program.

Finally, I am interested to learn more about NSF's investments in critical industries, including artificial intelligence, microelectronics, synthetic biology, and fusion energy. NSF supported research is foundational to our capacity as a nation to innovate and compete. And that brings me full circle to my earlier comment that now, more than ever, is the time to invest in NSF's full potential. Let us not cut our nose to spite our face.

I am very happy with President Biden's continued commitment to science as reflected in the fiscal year 2024 budget request. Again, I thank the witnesses for being here, and I look forward to your testimony today.

I yield back.