SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATHEMATICS (STEM) EDUCATION COALITION

American Association of Physics Teachers
American Chemical Society
American Educational Research Association
American Geological Institute
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Institute of Physics
Association of Science-Technology Centers
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Society of Mechanical Engineers
Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS)
Center for Educational Outreach, Whiting School of Engineering, Johns Hopkins University
Center for Mathematics, Science, and Technology, Illinois State University
Christa Corrigan McAuliffe Center for Education and Teaching Excellence
Delta Education
Dr. Lawrence D. Woolf, Senior Staff Physicist, General Atomics
Dr. Richard Hake, Emeritus Professor of Physics, Indiana University
Education Development Center, Inc.
Eisenhower National Clearinghouse
Exploratorium
Institute of Food Technologists
International Technology Education Association
Museum of Science, Boston
National Association of Biology Teachers
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Education Knowledge Industry Association
National Science Teachers Association
Optical Society of America
Project Lead the Way
Teaching Institute for Essential Science
Technology Student Association
TERC
The Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, & Cognitive Sciences
Triangle Coalition
Waksman Foundation for Microbiology

May 24, 2005

Dr. Warren Washington
Chairman
National Science Board
4201 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. Washington:

As you know, the FY2006 budget request would fund the National Science Foundation (NSF) below FY2004 funding and substantially reduces funding for the Education and Human Resources Directorate (EHR) for the second year in a row. On behalf of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education Coalition, we are writing to ask for your assistance in protecting the future of the STEM education and research programs at NSF. In the near term, we urge the National Science Board to use its considerable influence and prestige by writing a letter to Congress and the President in support of the NSF Education and Human Resources Directorate.

For the longer term, we suggest the Board work with NSF Director Arden Bement to establish a establish a blue ribbon panel of business, research and STEM education experts to define and inform the Administration, Congress, and the nation of the state of STEM education programs and research and identify future needs and priorities.

We are grateful for the support expressed by the Board at recent Congressional hearings for NSF's STEM education programs and related research initiatives. We are deeply concerned about the EHR budget and believe that forthright action is needed to prevent further decline. We believe that funding of STEM education programs and research should be restored *without* diminishing essential support for the research directorates.

Now is not the time in our history, regardless of tight budget environments, to reduce investments in STEM precollege and higher education programs and essential research. Without this investment, the U.S. risks losing its competitive edge in the global economy to countries like China and India. The evidence is overwhelming: U.S. STEM education programs and the relevant knowledge base are not keeping pace with global competition; our international test scores remain weak; offshore outsourcing continues to grow; countries in Europe and Asia are heavily investing in their educational infrastructures and they are reaping the benefits. Their patents are on the rise, their graduation rates for science and engineering degrees continue to climb, and businesses continue to move overseas in search of high-tech talent.

The NSF is the only agency that supports the kind of research and development that brings advances in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to the classroom. This is not the time to cut resources for innovative curricula, teacher support, and technological tools that can give our children the knowledge and skills they need to become the scientists, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians that the 21st Century demands. We need more programs to keep students and teachers engaged and motivated to learn STEM topics. Without support from the NSF, we will see more students opt out of STEM careers, putting their future success and our nation at risk.

If we can be of assistance in this endeavor, know that we are here to serve. Please contact either Patti Curtis at 571.237.6367 or Jodi Peterson at 703.243.7100.

CC: Dr. Arden Bement, Director