



November 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) urges Congress to work in a bipartisan manner to swiftly complete work on the fiscal year (FY) 2021 appropriations bills before the current Continuing Resolution (CR) expires on December 11. At the same time, we call on Congress to negotiate and pass additional long overdue emergency supplemental funding. This is essential to our ongoing response to and recovery from the current public health crisis.

Advancing the microbial sciences requires robust and sustained investments in basic and applied research across multiple agencies. Failure to complete work on the appropriations bills in a timely manner impedes our ability to address societal challenges such as combatting infectious disease, boosting food production and safety, and developing clean energy alternatives through innovative use of microbes. As we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, federal science and public health agencies need certainty—scientific progress is put at risk by disruptive, long-term CRs that prevent new programming and long-term planning.

ASM is a global society dedicated to the advancement of the microbial sciences and is composed of 30,000 scientists and health practitioners. Thousands of ASM's members are on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19, most especially our members who direct and work in clinical microbiology laboratories and hospital settings around the country. We also represent many thousands of members engaged in ground-breaking and essential research whose work has been disrupted, or curtailed, as a result of the pandemic.

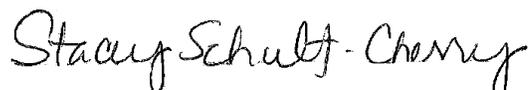
In addition to negotiating and passing FY 2021 appropriations bills with meaningful increases above inflation for federal science agencies, ASM calls on Congress to include the following emergency supplemental provisions in an end-of-year omnibus package:

- **At least \$26 billion in funding across federal science agencies to provide relief for research disrupted by the pandemic.** As a result of the pandemic, many researchers, students, post-docs and laboratory personnel across all scientific disciplines were forced to close facilities as a result of quarantine requirements and their work was suspended. Disruptions of this magnitude have implications not only for the research workforce, but also on the process of scientific discovery; recently released data from the Council on Governmental Relations show research output dropped between 20 - 40% in the first six months of the pandemic with a potential impact in the tens of billions of dollars across the research enterprise. Science cannot be turned on and off like a faucet but rather, ramping back up after a closure can takes months to years to accomplish.

- **At least \$15.5 billion in COVID-19-related and emergency relief funding should be allocated for NIH.** In addition to continuing support for Operation Warp Speed and RadX, this funding would support NIH-funded research laboratories that have either shut down or scaled back significantly during the public health emergency. Many have donated or repurposed personal protective equipment (PPE) from their laboratories to hospitals and front-line providers facing PPE shortages, have lost or needed to destroy cell samples, and may need to replace animal subjects. Without Congressional action, replacing these items will come at a significant cost that will have to be paid with existing grant funding, further setting back biomedical research not related to COVID-19.
- In addition to the funding requested for DOE to address pandemic-related research disruptions, \$150 million is needed for the Office of Science to support COVID-19 research efforts, building on initial investments in the CARES Act.
- **At least \$75 billion for testing and contact tracing:** In addition to supplemental emergency funding for the public health agencies to assist states and localities with their response, laboratories are in need of additional resources to meet testing demands which have increased dramatically in recent weeks. In addition to this funding being made available for COVID-19 related testing supplies and needs, clinical laboratories are also seeing a severe supply shortage for non-COVID-19-related testing due to the increase in demand for COVID-19 testing. **ASM recommends language be included in a final bill that provides laboratories with flexibility in how these dollars are spent so they can best serve their patients' needs.**
- **\$29 billion for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness Response,** including support for the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) and funding for materiel, including diagnostics, for the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) as proposed by the Senate. Testing kits and ancillary supply shortages have plagued laboratories over the course of the pandemic, and greater transparency is needed regarding resource allocation decisions.

Congress must fulfill its obligation to sustain the scientific ecosystem that makes us a world leader in science and innovation, and improves our health and benefits all aspects of society by completing work on the FY 2021 appropriations bills. At the same time, Congress cannot ignore the continued, devastating impact of COVID-19 on our nation's health and economy, especially as infections rise. Urgent action is needed, and ASM stands ready to assist you. For questions, please contact Allen Segal, ASM Director of Policy and Advocacy, at asegal@asmusa.org or 202-942-9294.

Sincerely,



Stacey Schultz-Cherry, Ph.D.
 Chair, Public and Scientific Affairs Committee
 American Society for Microbiology



Stefano Bertuzzi, Ph.D., MPH
 Chief Executive Officer
 American Society for Microbiology