

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2026

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable Brian Stone
Chief of Staff
National Science Foundation
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Director Vought and Mr. Stone,

We write regarding urgent concerns raised by Pennsylvania research universities about significant delays in the review, obligation, and disbursement of National Science Foundation (NSF) research awards in Fiscal Year 2026. These institutions report numerous applications and recommended awards that, in prior years, would ordinarily have been reviewed and obligated by this point in the fiscal cycle.

Pennsylvania's research universities play a critical role in advancing scientific discovery, educating the next generation of researchers, strengthening key industries, and supporting local and regional economies. NSF-funded research sustains high-skilled jobs, drives innovation across disciplines, and contributes to our nation's long-term competitiveness and security. When awards are delayed without clear explanation or predictable timelines, institutions are forced to postpone hiring, disrupt student and trainee support, slow research planning, and reconsider strategic investments in priority scientific fields.

We understand that part of the current slowdown may be attributable to diminished agency capacity following last year's reduction-in-force at NSF. At the same time, we have heard from institutions that additional review by the Office of Management and Budget has contributed to the delay in timely decision-making.

We are concerned that this added step has introduced newfound uncertainty into what has historically been a merit-based, time-sensitive grant review and award process. If accurate, such delays risk undermining the effectiveness, predictability, and integrity of the federal research enterprise.

Given these concerns, we request a timely briefing and written response focused on the current status of NSF grant review and obligation, the factors contributing to the slowdown, and the steps being taken to ensure timely award action. Specifically, we request answers to the following questions:

- How many NSF grant applications and recommended awards are currently pending final review, obligation, or disbursement beyond ordinary historical timelines?
- What operational, staffing, or interagency review factors are contributing most significantly to these delays?
- What role, if any, does OMB review currently play in the approval or obligation of NSF grants, and how has that process changed from prior practice?

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- What steps are NSF and OMB taking to ensure that pending awards are reviewed, obligated, and disbursed in a timely manner?
- What guidance has NSF provided to applicant institutions regarding revised timelines, communications protocols, and expectations for pending applications?

We strongly support a transparent, competitive, merit-based, and efficient federal research funding process consistent with congressional intent. Pennsylvania institutions, especially the students, faculty, and communities they serve, deserve clear communication and timely action on applications submitted in good faith and evaluated through established channels.

We therefore urge NSF and OMB to take immediate steps to resolve the current backlog, provide meaningful status updates to affected institutions, and ensure that awards ready for obligation are not subjected to unnecessary delay.

Sincerely,



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



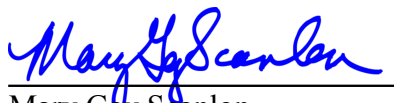
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Brian K. Fitzpatrick
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Summer L. Lee
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