National Association of Marine Laboratories

December 5, 2025

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair, CJS Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member, CJS Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chair, CJS Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Grace Meng
Ranking Member, CJS Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Moran, Chair Rogers, Ranking Member Van Hollen, and Ranking Member Meng:

On behalf of the National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML), I am writing to support final FY 2026 appropriations for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). **NAML urges Congress — in a stand-alone CJS bill or in the five-bill minibus currently under consideration — to provide the highest spending levels possible to the following agencies: no less than $6.1 billion to NOAA, no less than $9.0 billion to NSF, and no less than $24.9 billion to NASA, all amounts that were included in the Senate bill.** These agencies, including specific programs identified below, are essential to the health and future of our nation and to the research and education ongoing at our member laboratories. We thank both chambers for their continued support of our nation's research and education enterprise.

NAML is a network of 104 place-based marine and Great Lakes laboratories across the nation with a mission to promote excellence in research, education, and public outreach in the marine and freshwater sciences. NAML also seeks to provide a forum for the resolution of challenges common to nonprofit marine laboratories in the United States and to inform the wise use and conservation of marine and coastal resources.

The ocean science and technology enterprise—through its use and support of marine and Great Lakes laboratories—provides the knowledge, education, and training needed to address challenges faced by coastal communities that drive the ocean economy, which in turn plays a vital role in a thriving U.S. economy. Coastal counties in the United States are home to 40 percent of the population; if they were their own country, their GDP would rank third in the world, following only the United States and China.

The ocean and Great Lakes are also critical to our nation's prosperity and security, impacting everything from global commerce and national defense to food security and resilient

ecosystems. To ensure our security in these areas, the United States must invest in and support agencies and programs that both help us better understand and observe our changing ocean. These agencies will also need to ensure that we will have a trained workforce that enables us to maintain our international competitiveness.

While increasing funding for these agencies and programs (described below) is of critical importance to our nation, NAML acknowledges the reduced amount of federal funding available in FY 2025 under the *Fiscal Responsibility Act* (P.L. 118-5) caps. However, we were still disappointed by the disproportionate and drastic cuts to many NOAA ocean and coastal programs proposed in the Administration's Budget Request for FY 2025. We appreciate both committees rejecting many of these proposed cuts, as increased funding to these agencies and programs are essential to the health, security, and future of our nation and to the ongoing research, education, and outreach enterprise at NAML member laboratories.

As you finalize FY 2026 appropriations, NAML respectfully requests the committee support funding, at the highest levels possible, for extramural ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes research, conservation, observing, and education programs identified below.

NOAA
NOAA plays a key role in our nation's security, stability, and prosperity. NAML labs operate on the frontline of a constantly changing environment. Thus, we understand more than most how much our nation depends on healthy marine and freshwater resources, how weather and climate hazards challenge the resilience of coastal communities, and how research and education enterprises provide the knowledge and training for decision-makers in our coastal communities. Within NOAA's Operations, Research, and Facilities (ORF) Account, NAML requests no less than the FY 2024 enacted amounts listed amounts for the following programs:

- The **National Ocean Service ($685.0 million, FY 2026 House report)** enables the safe, sustainable, and efficient use of marine and coastal resources across sectors including maritime commerce and transportation, fishing, aquaculture, energy development, recreation, and inland export/import.
    - **Coral Reef Program ($33.5 million, FY 2026 House and Senate reports)** essential for supporting coral reef management, restoration and research activities in the 10 coral reef jurisdictions in the Atlantic/Caribbean and Pacific. The house version specially includes the funds for the Coral Reef Research Coordination Institutes, which support several marine labs in NAML.
    - **Integrated Ocean Observation System Regional Observations ($56.0 million, FY 2026 House report)** benefits the economy, public safety, and the environment through its network that collects real-time observing data, develops tracking and predictive tools, and delivers tailed products to stakeholders and decision-makers.
    - **Competitive Research ($20.0 million, FY 2026 House and Senate reports)** uses a competitive, external grant process to fund regional-scale and targeted research and assessment activities that support NOAA's coastal mission areas, including the only national grant programs dedicated to research topics in the *HAB and Hypoxia Research and Control Act.*
    - **National Estuarine Research Reserve System ($34.0 million, FY 2026 Senate report)** is a federal-state partnership that uses research and education to protect and understand estuarine resources, while functioning as sentinel sites within a changing environment.

    - **National Marine Sanctuaries and Marine Protected Areas ($67.0 million, FY 2026 House and Senate reports)** conserves and facilitates sustainable use of seascapes, wildlife, and maritime heritage resources.
- Within funding for the National Marine Fisheries Service, NAML requests the amounts below for the following programs:
    - **Prescott Grant Program ($4.5 million, FY 2026 Senate report)** provides competitive grants to stranding network organizations to rescue, rehabilitate, or investigate sick, injured, or distressed marine mammals and to determine the cause of death or disease of dead marine mammals.
    - **Aquaculture ($30.0 million, FY 2026 House report)** provides science, services, and policies to support the significant expansion and sustainability of U.S. marine aquaculture.
- **Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research ($666.8 million, FY 2026 House report)** included in the Senate report, including no less than the:
    - **National Sea Grant College Program ($80.0 million, FY 2026 House and Senate reports)** turns research into actions that support science-based sustainable practices around resilient communities and economies, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, healthy coastal ecosystems, and environmental literacy and workforce development.
    - **Sea Grant Aquaculture Research ($14.0 million, FY 2026 House and Senate reports)** is the largest, most comprehensive government grant program dedicated to supporting marine aquaculture development with grants addressing some of the top challenges to marine aquaculture.
    - **Ocean Exploration and Research ($51.0 million, FY 2026 House report)** is the only federal program dedicated to ocean exploration.
    - **National Oceanographic Partnership Program ($2.5 million, FY 2026 House and Senate reports)** is a unique catalyst for participation by nongovernmental organizations and industry in federal ocean research and education projects in the areas of data, resources, education, and communication.
    - **Sustained Ocean Observations and Monitoring ($52.5 million, FY 2026 House and Senate reports)** is a global system for observations and analysis of marine and ocean variables to support operational ocean services worldwide.
- **Office of Education** (**$35.5 million, FY 2026 Senate report)** provides leadership on education matters, promotes NOAA products, and services to the public, and provides support for education activities across the agency.
    - **Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Regional Programs ($8.7 million, FY 2026 House and Senate reports)** is an environmental education program for K–12 students and educators that promotes locally relevant, authentic experiential learning.
    - **Jose E. Serrano Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions ($20.8 million, FY 2026 Senate report**) uses a competitive process to provide financial assistance to students and Minority Serving Institutions that train students and conduct research in NOAA mission sciences.

NSF

NSF plays a key role in our nation's security, stability, and prosperity and has spurred many U.S. innovations that have made our nation the global leader in advancing research and education.

Within NSF, NAML requests no less than the listed amounts for the following programs:

- **Research and Related Activities ($7.2 billion, FY 2026 Senate report)** invests in both early-stage research and development of a future-focused science and engineering workforce that can accelerate progress in basic science and engineering research as well as support the private sector.
- **STEM Education ($1.0 billion, FY 2026 Senate bill and its continued existence as a directorate separate from Research and Related Activities)** advances equity, builds a future workforce for the needs of today and the industries of the future, and expands STEM opportunities to everyone, everywhere.

NASA

NASA's Earth-facing missions, which help us understand our planet on both a large and a small-scale, are of particular interest to NAML.

NAML requests no less than **$7.3 billion for Science (FY 2026 Senate report) and $2.2 billion for Earth Science (FY 2026 Senate report).**

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this input to the conference committee's upcoming deliberation and for your steadfast support of this nation's research and education enterprise. Thank you for your work to finalize the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Terry J. Donaldson, PhD
President, National Association of Marine Laboratories