

July 10, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Feinstein:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations committed to advancing scientific research on the microbiome, we respectfully request that the Senate Appropriations Committee match the \$10 million provided for microbiome research initiatives in the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Energy and Water appropriations bill passed by the House as part of H.R. 2740. Specifically, these funds would support the continued development and operation of the National Microbiome Data Collective (NMDC), which was launched with an initial \$10 million appropriation in FY 2019.

Understanding of the microbiome has evolved significantly since the concept of the human microbiome emerged roughly two decades ago. Today it is understood that microbial communities exist on, in, and around people, plants, animals, soil, oceans, and the atmosphere, making the microbiome relevant to almost everything. The rapid pace of discovery has led to greater technology needs and data sharing infrastructure.

The initiation of the community-centric NMDC is critical to advancing research on and understanding of the microbiome and its relationship to human and animal health, the food we produce and consume, the environment we live in, and our energy sources. The NMDC will enable data access, advanced analyses, and tool development for the larger scientific community, all with the aim of better, multi-disciplinary collaboration on microbiome research. Additional funding will sustain the NMDC and allow for the expansion of data providers and data types, as well as for the expansion of community engagement to include the biomedical, agricultural, built environment, and atmospheric sciences, and also national defense.

Through its aims to improve broader access to data and computational tools, the NMDC is supporting the objectives of the Interagency Microbiome Strategic Plan released in April 2018. This plan, developed by the federal Microbiome Interagency Working Group, recognizes the need for better coordination of microbiome research among federal agencies, and between agencies and both non-federal domestic and international microbiome research efforts.

With the requisite federal support, the NMDC will further scientific understanding of the microbiome and its functions and lead to the diverse application of discovery. By continuing to appropriate funds for the NMDC in FY 2020, you will ensure that this important initiative can reach its full potential. If we can be of further assistance, please have your staff contact Allen Segal, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at the American Society for Microbiology, at asegal@asmusa.org.

Sincerely,

American Gastroenterological Association

American Geophysical Union

American Phytopathological Society

American Society for Microbiology

American Society for Nutrition

American Society of Plant Biologists

Coalition for the Life Sciences

Crop Science Society of America

Ecological Society of America

Endocrine Society

Infectious Diseases Society of America

North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition

Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society

Soil Ecology Society

Soil Science Society of America

UC-San Diego

University of California System