



The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chair, and

The Honorable Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

House Science Space & Technology Committee

2321 Rayburn HOB

Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2020

Dear Chairwoman Johnson and Ranking Member Lucas:

The American Psychological Association (APA) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Committee's request for ideas for future near-term response and longer-term economic stimulus package(s) developed by the House to address and mitigate the impacts of the current COVID-19 crisis. The APA is the leading scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States, with more than 121,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students as its members. APA's mission is to promote the advancement, communication, and application of psychological science and knowledge to benefit society and improve lives.

As a member of the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF), APA is supportive of, and contributed to, the recent CNSF letter sent to House Science, Space, and Technology Committee on ways to support the National Science Foundation (NSF) regarding the COVID-19 crisis.

APA strongly recommends your support for the following investments to benefit society:

**National Science Foundation (NSF)**

**Opportunities for Additional R&D and Related Activities Specific to COVID-19 Response and Recovery**

The APA suggests support for a national or international research network on "pandemics, natural disasters, and climate change," which would encompass physical, biological, behavioral and social scientists working together to identify and address major issues underlying those topics. The funding request of \$18 million to support this effort would be used develop these collaborations through NSF's Research Coordination Networks program. For research that is further along, I-CORPS projects that involve integration of industry partners and regional interests would be relevant, as part of the larger National Innovation Network.

**Near-Term Response to COVID Impacts on the larger Research Enterprise**

The APA is supportive of the recent infrastructure request submitted to House and Senate leadership by the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) and other academic societies, providing emergency supplemental funds to replace the losses suffered by investigators, students, research institutions, and federal science agencies in the wake of the pandemic.

### **“Shovel-Ready” Research Infrastructure**

The APA recommends the Committee encourage NSF to consider expanding the current practice of funding mid-scale research projects to include the funding of research centers, which are often fruitful mechanisms for advancing innovative research and applying it to societal challenges. The level of support required for “mid-scale” research projects (\$10M-\$100M) could easily be applied to centers. Given NSF’s focus on convergence, centers would provide the necessary research infrastructure for transdisciplinary discovery.

### **Long-term Economic Stimulus/Recovery**

Strengthening the science workforce remains a challenge in the aftermath of pandemic-related training disruptions. APA strongly supports efforts, including through support the enactment of legislation such as [H.R. 2528](#), to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in STEM fields, including in psychological science. APA encourages redoubling efforts to identify, disseminate, and implement best practices in order to recruit, retain, and advance women, minorities and groups historically underrepresented in the STEM education pipeline.

APA continues to support the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program. APA encourages NSF to maintain its support of 2000 new GRFPs and encourages the Committee to ask NSF for an evaluation of how the COVID shutdowns may have adversely impacted the fellowship program.

### **Other Items for Consideration**

National Academies study. As seen in previous pandemics, as well as natural and man-made disasters, often the only means of prevention is via people’s behavior. Behavioral and social science research findings have informed the understanding of and response to COVID-19, but additional research is required to improve response to future pandemics. The APA suggests that COVID-related legislation provide \$1.5 million for NSF (led by the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate in collaboration with other relevant NSF directorates) to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) to produce an analysis of behavioral and social science research relevant to multiple dimensions of pandemic response. This analysis will identify the fundamental knowledge needed to guide the nation as it combats infectious disease and other global public health crises.

Virtual Roundtable. In these times of the COVID-19 crisis, and the ensuing stay-at-home orders, need for social distancing, and the resulting transition of nonessential workers to indefinite telework, APA recognizes that the business of Congress must be carried out through videoconferencing and other virtual technologies. In the absence of in-person congressional hearings, witness testimony, or briefings, APA suggests the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee convene a virtual roundtable on how social and behavioral science can inform the current COVID-19 response. Recently, Jay Van Bavel

(New York Univ.) and Robb Willer (Stanford Univ.) circulated a manuscript for the journal [Nature Human Behavior](#) titled “Using Social and Behavioural Science to Support COVID-19 Pandemic Response.” This article can serve as a starting point for the NASEM study proposed above. Either of these two experts (or a subset of their approximately 40 contributing authors) would be useful to include in a panel of experts to discuss relevant research. APA has already been in touch with both Dr. Van Bavel and Dr. Willer who expressed their enthusiasm and willingness to help.

Thank you again to the Committee for reaching out to the scientific community to solicit input to inform House efforts on addressing and mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please contact Craig Fisher ([cfisher@apa.org](mailto:cfisher@apa.org)) if we can provide clarification or additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kath Brunett McGuire', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Katherine Brunett McGuire

Chief Advocacy Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell D. Shilling', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Russell D. Shilling, PhD

Chief Science Officer