March 23, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Vice Chairwoman Collins, Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations committed to advancing scientific research on the microbiome, we would like to thank the House and Senate Appropriations Committees for their ongoing support for scientific research. As scientists continue to explore the connection between microbiomes and a broad spectrum of important issues, including human and animal health, food production and antimicrobial resistance, we are requesting that you include language in the report accompanying the Fiscal Year 2024 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill that directs the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to appoint an individual to lead the renewal of the charter for the Microbiome Interagency Working Group and to update the Interagency Strategic Plan for Microbiome Research.

Microbiome research aims to advance understanding of microbial communities (microbiomes) and how they interact with the world around us. 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, and the environment and have symbiotic relationships that support immunity and protect against disease. The rapid pace of discovery has led to greater technology needs and data sharing infrastructure.

The Interagency Strategic Plan for Microbiome Research FY2018-2022[1], developed by the Microbiome Interagency Working Group, provided recommendations for improving coordination of microbiome research among Federal agencies and between agencies and non-Federal domestic and international microbiome research efforts. The five-year Strategic Plan coordinated microbiome research activities across 21 government agencies, describing the interagency objectives, structure and operating principles, and research focus areas.

[1]Interagency Strategic Plan for Microbiome Research https://commonfund.nih.gov/sites/default/files/Interagency_Microbiome%20Strategic_Plan_Final_041918_508.pdf, accessed April 27, 2021.

As science advances and research accelerates, the need for interagency coordination has only grown. Efforts to coordinate microbiome research across agencies would increase efficiency and collaboration in areas that impact human, animal, and ecosystem health. The foundational work done by the Human Microbiome Project is directly connected to advances in human health. We need a similar movement that reaches across sectors.

As the Strategic Plan's term recently ended in Fiscal Year 2022, OSTP should renew the charter of the Microbiome Interagency Working Group to assess the current state of microbiome research and to work on an updated Strategic Plan for Microbiome Research. Specific areas of microbiome research, such as human and animal therapeutics, soil health, and biomanufacturing, are burgeoning sectors of global R&D and economically essential to the U.S. scientific enterprise.

Therefore, we request that you include the following language in the report accompanying the FY 2024 CJS appropriations bill:

> Microbiome.--- The Committee continues to support the work done by the Microbiome Interagency Working Group and the implementation of the Interagency Strategic Plan for Microbiome Research, which expired in Fiscal Year 2022. The Committee recognizes that microbiome research is foundational research with the potential to advance human, plant, animal, and environmental health and the bioeconomy. The Committee directs OSTP to appoint an individual dedicated to lead the renewal of the charter for the Microbiome Interagency Working Group and to update the Interagency Strategic Plan. The Committee requests an update on the status of the Working Group and Strategic Plan in the FY 2025 Congressional Justification.

With the requisite federal support, we can further scientific understanding of the microbiome and its functions and lead to the diverse application of discovery in biomedical, agricultural, built environment, atmospheric sciences, and national defense. If we can be of further assistance, please have your staff contact Amalia Corby, Senior Federal Affairs Officer at the American Society for Microbiology, at acorby@asmusa.org. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Microbiome Research Coordination Network
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Gastroenterological Association
American Geophysical Union
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Phytopathological Society
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Plant Biologists
Anschutz Center for Microbiome Excellence, University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Benioff Center for Microbiome Medicine, University of California San Francisco
Cedars-Sinai Human Microbiome Research Institute

Center for Microbial Exploration, University of Colorado Boulder
Center for Microbiome Analysis through Island Knowledge and Investigation, University of Hawaii at Manoa
Center for Microbiome Innovation, University of California San Diego
Center for Microbiome Research, University of California Irvine
Center for Microbiome Research at UMass Chan Medical School
Crop Science Society of America
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Endocrine Society
Entomological Society of America
Geological Society of America
Illinois Microbial Systems Initiative, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Joint Berkeley Initiative for Microbiome Sciences
Microbiome Centers Consortium
Ohio State University Center of Microbiome Science
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rutgers University School of Environmental and Biological Sciences
Soil Science Society of America
Stanford University
Synthetic Biology Young Speaker Series
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
The Microbiome Center, University of Chicago
Translational Genomics Research Institute
TransUniversity Microbiome Initiative, University of Virginia
University of Michigan Microbiome Core
University of North Carolina Microbiome Program
University of South Florida
Vanderbilt Microbiome Innovation Center
Wisconsin Energy Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison