Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 16, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Chairman Rogers, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, and Ranking Member Lowey:

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Semiconductor Caucus, we write to applaud your recent efforts to boost federal investments in basic research, and urge your continued support of the agencies that conduct critical research that enables American innovation.

Semiconductors – the microchips that are the fundamental enabling technology of all modern electronics – play a key role in our country's economic growth, technological leadership, and national security. The U.S. is the longstanding leader in this critical industry – the result of significant combined investments in research by the industry (U.S. semiconductor companies invest, on average, 20 percent of revenue into research, the highest percentage of any major industry) and federal agencies. This collaborative partnership among government, industry, and universities has achieved remarkable success in driving innovation and enabling the industry to produce ever faster, higher performing, more energy-efficient, and less expensive semiconductors. But U.S. technological leadership is being challenged by China and other nations. Significant investments in research programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the Department of Energy (DOE) are needed to drive the next wave of innovation in this foundational technology and enable the U.S. to derive the economic and security benefits of leading in this technology for decades to come.

The 2016 Omnibus Appropriations Bill provided significant funding increases for NSF, NIST, and DOE; and U.S. competitiveness requires that we continue to make targeted investments in research. NSF, NIST, and DOE are leading efforts on much needed research to advance America's high-speed computing superiority and critical research that will enable a new wave of American innovation, including enabling technology for the Internet of Things.

As you undertake the appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2017, we encourage you to maintain continued funding for the research being conducted by NSF, NIST, and DOE.

Sincerely,

James Risch
United States Senator

Pete Sessions
Member of Congress

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

cc: Chairman Richard Shelby, Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee
Vice Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski, Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee
Chairman John Culberson, House CJS Appropriations Subcommittee
Ranking Member Mike Honda, House CJS Appropriations Subcommittee
Chairman Lamar Alexander, Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee
Ranking Member Diane Feinstein, Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee
Chairman Mike Simpson, House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee
Ranking Member Marcy Kaptur, House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee