April 23, 2024

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

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

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chair Shaheen, and Ranking Member Moran:

We write to urge you to prioritize funding for the U.S. Department of Commerce initiatives to advance responsible innovation of artificial intelligence (AI) systems in the upcoming fiscal year.[1]

Fully funding the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) budget request for funding to safeguard, regulate, and promote AI is critically important as NIST works to establish the U.S. AI Safety Institute and operationalize its AI Risk

[1] National Institute of Standards and Technology & National Technical Information Service, Budget Submission to Congress, Fiscal Year 2025

Management Framework.[2] In particular, fully funding NIST's request of $47.7 million in additional funding for its Scientific and Technical Research and Services account to advance AI research, standards, and testing will help build a foundation for responsible development and deployment of AI systems for years to come.

We were encouraged by the recently enacted Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2024, which included $10 million to establish NIST's U.S. AI Safety Institute.[3] However, the overall budget cut of over 10 percent presents major operational challenges to NIST's efforts to sustainably guide responsible development of AI systems.[4]

For over a century, NIST has served as a trusted and impartial leader in contributing to the development of technical standards and promoting innovation across a range of American industries. Its world-renowned expertise in measurement science and cutting-edge technology make it well-suited to lead the federal government's efforts to address the complex challenges presented by AI systems. However, due to years of funding shortfalls, many NIST facilities are in disrepair, forcing researchers to employ makeshift solutions and workarounds that undermine productivity.[5]

By investing in NIST's unique scientific expertise to identify techniques to measure the capabilities, limitations, and potential risks posed by AI systems, we can build public trust in AI to foster continued innovation while safeguarding the public from harm. NIST is uniquely qualified to contribute to the development of well-defined technical standards, test methods, and objective evaluation techniques, which are prerequisites for any effective AI governance framework, especially as AI systems rapidly increase in scale and complexity.

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[2] *Id*.
[3] U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations and U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, Joint Explanatory Statement, Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024
[4] U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, Summary, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024
[5] Cat Zakrzewski, *This agency is tasked with keeping AI safe. Its offices are crumbling*, Washington Post (Mar. 6, 2024)

As organizations focused on a wide range of AI policy goals, we agree that fully funding NIST's ability to advance responsible innovation of AI systems is an urgent priority that deserves our full support.

As cutting-edge AI systems rapidly evolve, ensuring NIST has the resources it needs to drive responsible AI innovation is essential to maintain America's technological leadership and safeguard our future.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Americans for Responsible Innovation
BSA | The Software Alliance
Center for AI Safety
Federation of American Scientists
Public Knowledge
A Capital
Accountable Tech
AI Forensics
AI Policy Institute
Alliance for Digital Innovation
Amazon
American Civil Liberties Union
Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence
BABL AI
Backpack Healthcare
Bentley Systems
Box
Capitol Technology University
Carnegie Mellon University
Center for AI and Digital Policy
Center for AI Policy
Center for Democracy & Technology
Cisco

CivAI
Clarifai
Cohere
Common Crawl Foundation
Credo AI
Docusign
Drexel University
Duke University
Duquesne University, Carl G Grefenstette Center for Ethics
Elastic
EleutherAI
Encode Justice
FAIR Institute
FAR AI
Fight for the Future
ForHumanity
Free Software Foundation
Future of Life Institute
Future of Privacy Forum
Gesund.ai
GitHub
Hewlett Packard Enterprise
HireVue
Hitachi
Hugging Face
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society
IBM
Imbue
Inclusive Abundance Initiative
Information Ethics & Equity Institute
Information Technology Industry Council (ITI)
Institute for AI Policy & Strategy (IAPS)
Institute for Progress
Intel
Intuit

ITIF Center for Data Innovation
Johns Hopkins University
Kyndryl
Leela AI
LF AI & Data Foundation
Lucid Privacy Group
Machine Intelligence Research Institute
Madrona Venture Group
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Mastercard
Meta
Microsoft
Nasdaq
National Retail Federation
NetApp
New America's Open Technology Institute
OpenAI
Palantir
Pindrop
Proof (formerly Notarize)
Public Citizen
Responsible AI Institute
Safer AI
Salesforce
SandboxAQ
SAP
SAP America
SAS Institute
Scale AI
SecureBio
ServiceNow
Socure
SV Angel
The Future Society
The Leadership Conference's Center for Civil Rights and Technology

Transformative Futures Institute
TrueLaw
Trustible
Twilio
UC Berkeley, Center for Human-Compatible AI
University at Buffalo, Center for Embodied Autonomy and Robotics
University of South Carolina, AI Institute
Workday