

May 14, 2021

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

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

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

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

Dear Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

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, such as climate change and antimicrobial resistance, we are requesting increased coordination and support for microbiome research across Federal science agencies.

Research on the microbiome aims to advance understanding of microbial communities (microbiomes) and how they interact with the world around us. This research has broad, practical implications for human nutrition, health care, food production, and environmental restoration to benefit individuals, communities, and the environment. 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 all living things. The rapid pace of discovery has led to greater technology needs and data sharing infrastructure.

The Interagency Strategic Plan for Microbiome Research FY2018-2022¹, developed by the Microbiome Interagency Working Group (MIWG), provides 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 provides recommendations for improving coordination of microbiome research activities in eight Target Areas across 21 government agencies, including the Department of Energy Office of Science, National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The Strategic Plan also proposes interagency objectives, structure and operating principles, and recommends three areas to transform microbiome discoveries to solutions:

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

1. Supporting interdisciplinary and collaborative research to enable a predictive understanding of the function of microbiomes in diverse ecosystems to enhance public health, food, and environmental security and grow new bioeconomy product areas.
2. Developing platform technologies to generate critical insights and to improve access to and sharing of microbiome data across ecosystems.
3. Expanding the microbiome workforce through educational opportunities, citizen science, and public engagement.

As the Strategic Plan's term ends in FY 2022, you can ensure that this important initiative can reach its full potential by requesting that the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) evaluate the progress made and develop a proposal for continuation of the work in the next iteration of the Strategic Plan. We request that you also consider whether the Federal investment has been adequate to fully realize the promise of microbiome research.

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 Allen Segal, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at the American Society for Microbiology, at asegal@asmusa.org.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Microbiomes Research Coordination Network
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Geophysical Union
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Phytopathological Society
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Agronomy
Biophysical Society
Crop Science Society of America
Endocrine Society
Geological Society of America
International Agricultural Microbiome Research Coordination Network
Microbiome Centers Consortium
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society
Rochester Institute of Technology
Soil Health Institute
Soil Science Society of America
Tufts University
Union of Concerned Scientists
University of California San Diego
University of California System
Wisconsin Energy Institute