

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 22, 2023

The Honorable Sethuraman Panchanathan
Director
U.S. National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA. 22314

Dear Director Panchanathan:

We write to you today requesting a detailed update on the progress that has been made to implement Section 10359 of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-167) (CHIPS Law). We worked together to include this provision, which supports our critical mineral mining industry and makes new funding available to grow an essential workforce, and are eager to learn what steps the National Science Foundation (NSF) has taken to implement this provision and engage with communities across the country on available opportunities.

As you know, global energy and mineral demands continue to increase at a rapid rate. To ensure the United States is able to innovate and compete on a global scale, we must recruit, educate, train, and develop tomorrow's workforce today, providing them the tools they need to meet the challenge of developing a secure domestic resource supply chain that will strengthen our nation's future economic and national security.


Currently, the U.S. has 14 mining schools accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. The estimated enrollment at these schools has rapidly declined from almost 1,500 in 2015 to just under 600 students today, and roughly only 200 students are anticipated to graduate with Bachelor of Science degrees in mining engineering from U.S. schools this year. Recognizing this essential need for a skilled mining workforce, we added language to the CHIPS Law to include new funding opportunities to support training and education for the development, preparation, and retention of mining professionals. Our provisions under Section 10359 of the CHIPS Law directed NSF to make funding opportunities available to universities and nonprofit organizations to grow the next generation of mining engineers and support research and innovations that will improve mining technologies, reducing our reliance on China and other adversaries for critical minerals and materials.

We also recognized the importance of promoting research and innovation for critical mineral mining and strategies, which is why provisions under Section 10359 ensure "better use of domestic resources," secure our domestic supply chains, and promote new mapping, processing, and production advancements. The United States has the capacity to be the global leader in critical mineral mining, production, and manufacturing, and our provisions included in the CHIPS Law help empower individuals, organizations, and companies to help the U.S. meet increasing global demands.


It is critical that the NSF swiftly implement Sec. 10359, so that the U.S. remains competitive with a strong, skilled, and adaptive workforce to meet the needs of the modern mining industry. The need could not be more immediate, and we look forward to receiving an update on your implementation of our initiative and learning about the plans you have for future projects under these provisions.

We respectfully request that you provide us this update by January 12, 2024.

Sincerely,



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Cynthia M. Lummis
United States Senator