

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 16, 2025

The Honorable Christopher Wright  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Wright:

We write to express our deep concern regarding the Department of Energy's (DOE) recent decision to impose a cap on indirect cost rates for DOE-funded research. This change threatens to destabilize America's scientific research infrastructure, delay critical energy innovation, and result in widespread economic harm. At a time when China is investing billions to catch up to the scientific advancements driven by decades of DOE investments, the U.S. should be accelerating its technological leadership, but this policy does the opposite.

DOE has long played a crucial role in supporting cutting-edge research in energy, climate science, advanced manufacturing, and national security. By capping indirect cost rates at 15 percent, this new policy undermines the essential support systems that make this research possible—such as the operation and maintenance of research facilities, labs, and technical infrastructure. Research institutions depend on these funds to conduct safe, innovative, and effective science.

This cap represents a sweeping, indiscriminate funding cut that will jeopardize not just projects at universities but also university partners at the national laboratories and in industry. Scientists could be forced to scale back or shutter vital studies; collaboration across sectors may be frozen; and the next generation of clean energy technologies could be delayed or lost entirely. Even more worrying is the impact on our future science workforce, particularly in energy and critical and emerging technologies, where our Nation has long struggled to recruit and train the best talent into roles at the intersection of technology and national security.

Beyond its scientific implications, this policy change has serious economic consequences. DOE-funded research supports tens of thousands of jobs—from researchers and engineers to technical staff and support personnel—across all 50 states. In fiscal year 2024 alone, federal energy research investments generated billions in economic activity and helped anchor American competitiveness in global innovation markets. Weakening that support will reverberate through entire regions and industries, putting livelihoods at risk.

The policy's abrupt implementation—absent consultation with the research community or Congress—has also introduced confusion and uncertainty into the energy research ecosystem.

Programs will be paused, partnerships disrupted, and project leaders left with no clarity about how to proceed. In a moment that demands bold, collaborative leadership to meet America's energy needs, these actions cause paralysis instead. In regards to this new policy cap, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. What will happen to existing awards at universities if they do not meet the new terms and conditions in this policy?
2. What specific data or analysis did DOE use to determine that a 15% cap on indirect costs is appropriate and sustainable for research institutions?
3. How does DOE justify this cap given that many universities currently operate with indirect cost rates significantly higher than 15% to cover essential research infrastructure and compliance?
4. Was there any consultation with academic stakeholders, such as university administrators or research organizations, prior to implementing this policy change?
5. What impact assessments has DOE conducted to understand how this cap will affect the financial viability of ongoing and future research projects at universities?
6. Has DOE evaluated how this cap could influence the United States' position in global research and innovation competitiveness?
7. What are the long-term implications of this policy on the pipeline of future scientists and researchers trained through university programs?

Particularly in light of the lack of information justifying this policy we also ask that you to immediately reverse this shortsighted and harmful new cap, which amounts to nothing short of a disastrous funding cut. DOE's mission is too important to allow political interference to undercut America's progress in energy research, climate resilience, and economic development. Let our scientists, engineers, and institutions continue their lifesaving, world-shaping work—uninterrupted.

Sincerely,



Marcy Kaptur  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy  
and Water Development  
House Committee on Appropriations



Patty Murray  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy  
and Water Development  
Senate Committee on Appropriations