

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 23, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

We write regarding a new proposal from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to terminate funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s Cooperative Institutes (CIs). We strongly condemn any such plan and believe terminating this funding would be extremely short-sighted and costly to the American people and economy in the long run.

Colorado is fortunate to be the only state to house two Cooperative Institutes and the largest of the CIs. The Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere (CIRA), housed at Colorado State University, employs 193 staff working on developing algorithms for weather forecasting and fire weather forecasting. The Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) housed at the University of Colorado Boulder is the oldest and largest CI, established in 1967. CIRES is focused on research into drought, wildfire, and space weather, among other important issues. It employs nearly 800 researchers, support staff and students who are working each day to improve our understanding of Earth systems for the benefit of people across Colorado and the nation.

Our CIs have real world impacts and benefits that span beyond the borders of our state. CIRA was involved in the development of the Hurricane Intensity Prediction System (HIPS), a tool that helps predict how strong hurricanes will become, as well as TORUS (Targeted Observations by Radars and Unmanned Aircraft to Study Tornadoes and Supercells) project, which focuses on collecting data to improve tornado and storm prediction. CIRES is, among its many important contributions, helping to enhance drought monitoring and prediction on the Colorado River, aiding water managers in the region. Indeed, some of the greatest beneficiaries of CIRES water and drought analyses reside in Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Texas. CIRES also received the 2022 Colorado Governor's Award for High-Impact Research for their rapid response to the Marshall Fire, the most damaging wildfire in our state. The results from the CIRES work on the fire have informed responses to other large fire events elsewhere in the nation, benefiting many thousands of citizens.

Many of NOAA's CIs have been around for decades and the work they do has been helping our communities for just as long. Cuts to funding, furloughs or layoffs will have devastating impacts on the important work the CIs do. CIs are home to experienced researchers and long-standing data collection programs with major impacts on human societies, moreover they are instrumental in training future generations of workers who continue to contribute to societal needs. It is our fear that if sweeping cuts are made, the damage will be irreversible. Even short-term interruptions in their research could threaten the safety and economies of the communities that CIs serve across the nation.

Cooperative Institutes are integral to solving some of our biggest problems and making all of us safer and better prepared for short-term and long-term hazards. Any plan to terminate funding for NOAA CIs would be detrimental not just to the people of Colorado, but to people across the entire country. As such, we implore you to reconsider any plans to substantially diminish these powerful and important capabilities.

Sincerely,



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator