April 4, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
U.S. Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-142
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-188
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Simpson
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Committee on Appropriations
2362-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Feinstein, Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Kaptur:

On behalf of the international society for optics and photonics (SPIE), representing 650 companies and 19,000 scientists, I am writing today to thank you for your support of the inertial confinement fusion (ICF) program within DOE, and more specifically federal funding of the Omega laser within the Laboratory for Laser Energetics (LLE) in the FY18 omnibus. SPIE also requests continued support of the program, and facilities within it, in FY19.

The Laboratory for Laser Energetics (LLE) is one of three major facilities supported by the inertial confinement fusion (ICF) program, which falls within the National Nuclear Security Administration at DOE. These three weapons labs are comprised of LLE’s Omega, Sandia National Laboratories’ Z experimental device, and Livermore National Laboratory’s National Ignition Facility. Research at these facilities is in support of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, both maintenance and modernization, as well as the training scientists capable of assessing the nuclear capabilities of other countries. In addition to furthering nuclear weapon science through the research it performs, LLE is the largest NNSA training facility for graduate students, providing a critical pipeline of specialized experts. The Omega laser is also critical to maintaining the U.S. position in laser technology by increasing our scientific knowledge key to industrial progress and to non-nuclear defense applications.

SPIE was concerned to see that the President’s FY19 budget included a request for a 20% cut to the ICF program, and a three-year phase out of funding for the Omega Laser. Such a cut would have a great impact on ability of ICF to achieve its mission as a whole, and deprive our nation of the significant contributions of the LLE facility.

Therefore, we ask that the subcommittees continue to build on the support provided in the FY18 omnibus by providing $80 million for the LLE Omega laser and $555 million for the ICF program in the FY2019 Energy and Water Appropriations bill.
For further information on this request, please contact SPIE Government Affairs Director, Jennifer O’Bryan at jennifer@spie.org.

Sincerely,

Eugene Arthurs
CEO
SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics