

October 21, 2026

The Honorable Cherelle L. Parker
Mayor of Philadelphia
City Hall, Room 215
Philadelphia, PA 19107

The Honorable Members of the Philadelphia City Council
City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: Support for the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University and the Continued Care of Its Collections

Dear Mayor Parker and Members of City Council:

On behalf of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), I write to express our strong support for the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University and our deep concern at the prospect of the museum's closure. We urge the City of Philadelphia to recognize that the Academy is not only a beloved local institution, but one of profound national and international significance, and to support the continued research at the Academy and the expert care of its irreplaceable scientific collections.

AIBS is a nonprofit scientific association dedicated to promoting informed decision-making that advances biological research and education. Our members—scientific societies, research institutions, natural history museums, botanic gardens, biological field stations, and universities—represent tens of thousands of biologists across the United States and around the world. We speak for a community that understands firsthand the value of natural science collections and of the institutions that steward them.

Founded in 1812, the Academy of Natural Sciences is the oldest natural science research institution and museum in the United States and a globally important center for biodiversity research. Its collections—more than 19 million specimens of animals, plants, and minerals—constitute an irreplaceable resource for the national and international scientific community. These holdings are essential to addressing the defining challenges of the 21st century, from tracking the impacts of climate change and protecting biodiversity to safeguarding public health and food security.

The Academy's holdings are of unparalleled historical and scientific importance to American natural history. Among the treasures under its care are Thomas Jefferson's fossil collection, the Lewis and Clark Herbarium, and the Titian Peale Moth and Butterfly Collection. The Academy also holds some of the largest and most comprehensive

collections of birds, mollusks, freshwater fish, and aquatic microorganisms found anywhere in the world. Collections such as these cannot be recreated; each specimen is an irreplaceable record of a species at a specific moment in time and place.

Equally vital are the curatorial and scientific staff who care for these collections. These experts are recipients of numerous competitive grants from the National Science Foundation, train the next generation of biodiversity researchers, and draw scientists to Philadelphia from across the globe. Their work, and the specimens in their care, have contributed to hundreds of scientific publications as well as the exhibits and public programs that bring science to the people of Philadelphia. Scientific collections are not static archives; they are active, dynamic tools for discovery, and in an era of rapid environmental change the Academy's 214-year effort to document life on Earth is more relevant today than at any point in its history.

The stewardship of such an invaluable resource requires a sustained commitment to expert long-term care and to accessibility for the global research community. The loss of the institutional support or the specialist staff needed to maintain these collections for active research would represent an immense and permanent loss—not only to the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, but to the worldwide scientific enterprise. We therefore respectfully urge the Mayor and City Council to do all within their power to ensure a sustainable future for the Academy, its research mission, and the expert care of its collections.

AIBS and our members stand ready to serve as a resource as these deliberations move forward, and we would welcome the opportunity to lend our expertise in support of an outcome that honors the Academy's scientific and educational mission. The Academy is a shared treasure—a foundational record of our planet's history and a key to its future. We thank you for your attention to this matter of national and international importance.

Respectfully,



Scott Glisson
Chief Executive Officer
American Institute of Biological Sciences