

April 24, 2019

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chairwoman, Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Ranking Member, Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Johnson and Ranking Member Lucas:

On behalf of 8,000 members of the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG), I wish to convey the Society's strong support of H.R. 36, the *Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2019*. ASHG believes that science can only achieve its vital goals for knowledge and human health when we are able to fully engage the minds, talent and perspectives of all those who wish to dedicate themselves to the scientific enterprise. This requires a productive and safe working environment for all. ASHG endorses H.R. 36's goal to establish and rigorously apply effective uniform rules in all research settings to prevent and address harassing behaviors, including sexual harassment, coercion, and unwanted sexual attention.

The ASHG is the primary professional membership organization for human genetics specialists worldwide. The large majority of the Society's membership are researchers, and we also have physicians, genetic counselors, laboratory practice professionals, nurses, and others who have a special interest in human genetics. Our members work in a wide range of settings, including universities, hospitals, institutes, biotech companies, the pharmaceutical industry, and medical and research laboratories.

The ASHG is committed to promoting a harassment-free workplace for geneticists and, as the field's largest professional society, we articulate these values in our own programs. Most recently, ASHG introduced a new code of conduct for our annual meeting, setting a clear expectation for behavior in our community at this largest event for the genetics community. Yet there is much more to be done across the research spectrum. Sexual harassment of women staff and students at colleges and universities remains shockingly high and any amount is unacceptable. A 2018 report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine reported that greater than 50% of women faculty and staff in academia, and 20-50% of women students, encounter or experience sexual harassment, and concluded that institutions of all kinds must do more to address the problem. Major progress is essential to ensure the ability of individual scientists to work in safe, harassment-free environments, and to advance science itself, because cultures of harassment lead to a demonstrable loss of talent from research.

H.R. 36 charges the Office of Science and Technology Policy with leading the development of uniform policy guidelines for all federal science funding agencies related to sexual harassment. Federal science agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation would be tasked with developing policies consistent with these guidelines. The bill further establishes a research program to better understand sexual harassment in the STEM field and commissions a follow-up study by the National Academies to assess progress made.

Thank you for introducing this legislation and for your strong leadership on this issue. If the ASHG can be of additional service, please contact Derek Scholes, ASHG senior director of policy and advocacy dscholes@ashg.org who can coordinate further discussion about these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Wynshaw-Boris', written in a cursive style.

Anthony Wynshaw-Boris, MD, PhD

President-Elect