



SPNHC

ADVANCING COLLECTIONS CARE

May 12, 2021

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

The Honorable Haley Stevens
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
1510 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Waltz
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
213 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Endorsement of the NSF for the Future Act (H.R. 2225)

Dear Chairwoman Johnson, Ranking Member Lucas, Chairwoman Stevens, and Ranking Member Waltz:

I am writing on behalf of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections to endorse the bipartisan legislation, *the National Science Foundation for the Future Act* (H.R. 2225), which proposes vital investments in our nation's scientific enterprise. We appreciate the bipartisan leadership and strong commitment to scientific research demonstrated in this bill.

The Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) is a non-profit scientific society dedicated to promoting informed decision-making that advances biological research and education. Our members are museums, universities, curators, and collection professionals who specialize in natural history collections. Our mission is to improve the preservation, conservation and management of natural history collections and the biological objects stored in them to ensure their continuing value to scientific research, education, and society. Our ability to understand the natural world depends on the collection, preservation, and ongoing study of natural history specimens. These collections are the physical record of Earth's life forms and processes. The study of natural science collections allows us to forecast the future of the planet – information that profoundly affects our lives.

Scientific collections, and the collections professionals and scientists who create, care for, and study these resources, are a vital component of our nation's research infrastructure. These collections, the data they represent, and their associated experts contribute to the expansion of our bioeconomy. Whether held at a museum, government managed laboratory or archive, or in a university science department, these scientific resources form a coordinated network of specimens, samples, and data (for example, genetic, tissue, organism, and environmental) that are a unique and irreplaceable foundation from which scientists are studying and explaining past and present life on Earth.

NSF is the only federal agency that funds basic research in all non-medical fields of science and engineering. NSF plays a unique role in protecting and expanding access to our nation's scientific collections. NSF supports research that uses existing collections as well as studies that gather new natural history specimens. NSF's Directorates for Biological Sciences (BIO), Geosciences (GEO), and



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Social and Behavioral and Economic sciences support research and student training opportunities in natural history collections. NSF is an important supporter of national biological research infrastructure that houses natural history collections, such as living stock collections and field stations. NSF also funds evolving work to digitize high priority specimen collections. The result of this effort is that irreplaceable biological specimens and their associated data are now accessible through the Internet to researchers, educators, and the public. In addition to supporting research, NSF's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education programs enhance the ability of museums, botanic gardens, zoos, and other research institutions to provide science learning opportunities for students.

We appreciate the emphasis placed on the importance of sustained support for biological research collections in H.R. 2225. Recent reports from the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine and the Biodiversity Collections Network have highlighted the value of mobilizing biodiversity collections and data in spurring new scientific discoveries that grow our economy, improve our public health and wellbeing, and increase our national security. Both reports articulate a common vision of the future of biological collections and define a need to broaden and deepen the collections and associated data to realize the potential for biodiversity collections to inform 21st century science. This endeavor requires robust investments in our nation's scientific collections, whether they are owned by a federal or state agency or are part of an educational institution or free-standing natural history museum or another research center. The investments proposed in H.R. 2225 would be critical in the efforts to mobilize biodiversity specimens and data in spurring new scientific discoveries.

SPNHC is currently working to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the biological sciences and supports the bill's provisions for broadening access to research opportunities for underrepresented groups. We also full support the increased financial support proposed for the Graduate Research Fellowship Program, which is an important program for recruiting and retaining underrepresented students.

We thank you for your leadership on this bipartisan effort to make much needed investments in our nation's scientific enterprise and to position the U.S. to lead on innovation and discovery. If you have any questions or require further information in order to advance this bill, please do not hesitate to contact SPNHC President Paul Mayer (president@spnhc.org)

Sincerely,

Paul Mayer
President, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections

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