



April 21, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Smith, Chairman
House Science, Space and Technology Committee
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member
House Science, Space and Technology Committee
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: HR 1806, *The America COMPETES Reauthorization Act*

Dear Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee:

On behalf of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, I would like to thank you for your continued efforts to reauthorize the *America COMPETES Act*. Thank you, too, for addressing several of the concerns the scientific community raised with prior versions of the legislation.

The American Institute of Biological Sciences is a federation that includes more than 100 scientific societies and organizations spanning the breadth of the biological sciences. As such, we were pleased to see a proposed increase in the authorization level for the National Science Foundation (NSF) for fiscal year (FY) 2016.

The community remains concerned, however, that HR 1806 specifies funding allocations for NSF's research directorates. NSF has a stellar track record of supporting innovative, interdisciplinary research that yields transformative results. These scientific advancements have been achieved in part because NSF has had the flexibility to support promising research at the interface of different disciplines. This flexibility is important, and a valuable tool for supporting innovative new lines of research.

The *America COMPETES Act of 2007* and the reauthorization bill in 2010 recognized the value of this system of funding and thus did not provide this level of detail. Nor have annual appropriations bills set funding levels within NSF's Research and Related Activities account. Our nation has benefited greatly by allowing the National Science Board and leadership of NSF to make strategic investments in research programs. We think the existing process in which Congress does not limit or promote specific funding levels for the various research directorates at NSF has served the nation well and should be maintained.

We also ask that you change the reauthorization provisions for the Department of Energy Office of Science. The bill, as introduced, would cut funding for the Biological and Environmental Research program by seven percent below the FY 2015 funding level. This program supports important research in the areas of genomic science, bioenergy, and environmental research. In addition to advancing U.S. energy independence, this program supports research and environmental models that are part of broader efforts to understand the linkages among water, energy, and climate. Please reconsider the proposed cuts to the Biological and Environmental Research program's authorization level.

We also encourage the Committee to reconsider the provisions in section 505 of the bill regarding duplication of climate change research in the Office of Science. Climate change research is a government-wide activity. Indeed, the U.S. Global Change Research Program, which was created by Congress, is responsible for coordinating and integrating climate research across 13 federal agencies. Thus, this provision is unnecessary and duplicative of existing government functions.

We remain committed to working with the House Science, Space and Technology Committee to ensure that the United States remains a global leader in scientific research. Please contact me at rgropp@aibs.org or 202-628-1500 ext. 250 if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Robert Gropp, Ph.D.
Interim Co-Executive Director