



May 12, 2015

Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McCarthy and Minority Leader Pelosi:

As President of the American Sociological Association, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the *America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015* (H.R. 1806) as approved by the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology on April 22, 2015.

Of particular concern are provisions pertaining to the National Science Foundation (NSF), especially those setting specific authorization levels for NSF's research directorates. In essence, this means that the scientists who work at NSF, along with the scientists around the nation engaged in the merit review process, can no longer decide what disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas have the most cutting-edge work going on in them that should be funded.

Every other country in the world attempts to emulate the NSF peer review process because it has proven to be the most successful approach to investing in basic science. By undermining NSF's merit review process for making strategic investment decisions in the vast marketplace of scientific ideas, H.R 1806 reduces our nation's scientific competitiveness. The *America COMPETES Reauthorization Act*, therefore, as currently written, reduces America's competitiveness in science.

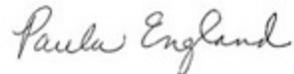
Within the funding levels authorized for NSF for FY 2016 and 2017 is a cut of nearly 45 percent to NSF's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE). With less than 5 percent of NSF's budget, SBE funds over half of all university-based social, economic and behavioral science basic research. Such a cut effectively eliminates new

SBE research grants making it impossible for our nation's leading universities to provide knowledge from basic research on such issues as how humans process information, make decisions, and communicate with one another and with technology. This and similar knowledge from SBE research is fundamental to the advancement of scientific knowledge and innovation across the natural and bio-medical sciences as well as across social and behavioral disciplines.

The American Sociological Association is the national organization for sociology in the United States. With more than 13,000 members in universities and colleges, businesses and industry, non-profit and government research institutes, the association has strived for 115 years to promote the scientific contributions of sociology to advancing the wellbeing of our people and country.

It is my hope that H.R. 1806 will not move forward in its current form so that Congress can enact a strong reauthorization bill that utilizes the full range of scientific work thereby maintaining and strengthening our nation's role as the leader in science and technology.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paula England".

Paula England, President, American Sociological Association
Professor of Sociology, New York University