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February 22, 2022

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chair
House Committee on Science, Space and
Technology
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank D. Lucas
Ranking Member
House Committee on Science, Space and
Technology
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Cantwell, Chairwoman Johnson, Vice Chair Wicker, and Ranking Member Lucas:

Thank you for your bicameral leadership and commitment to advancing legislation to reauthorize key scientific agencies for the first time in nearly a decade. On behalf of the scientific organizations that we lead, [Population Association of America](#) (PAA) and [Association of Population Centers](#) (APC), and as you enter deliberations to reconcile the America COMPETES Act of 2022 and the US Innovation and Competition Act (USICA), we would like to share our support for key provisions that will bolster American scientific leadership across all disciplines.

Our organization previously endorsed H.R. 2225, the NSF for the Future Act (NSFFA), which was approved in the House last summer, and thus we were pleased that the recently passed America COMPETES Act of 2022 included NSFFA within this broader measure. The National Science Foundation is the only federal scientific agency that supports basic research across all scientific disciplines, and thus we were extremely gratified to see that both USICA and COMPETES authorize a greater than doubling of the NSF budget within five years. It is also worth noting that both USICA and NSFFA were approved with strong bipartisan margins, which also signals the bipartisan support that this agency rightfully enjoys.

We appreciate that both USICA and COMPETES would create a new directorate within NSF that would leverage cross-cutting partnerships and interdisciplinary collaboration to advance technological innovation and translational research. We agree that the American people would benefit from a renewed focus on convergent research, so long as the enterprise allows for contributions from all scientific disciplines and does not inadvertently create new “silos” by mandating a fixed menu of research topics. We urge the conferees to adopt provisions that allow the NSF Director flexibility in setting research priorities within the new Directorate, and that encourage participation among all scientific disciplines, including the social sciences. In addition, we urge conferees to ensure that budgetary growth within the new Directorate does not come at the expense of any of the existing directorates under the Research and Related Activities account.

We urge you to consider retaining provisions from NSFFA/COMPETES that explicitly support inclusion of the social and behavioral sciences within the activities of the new Directorate and that require that those disciplines be represented on peer review panels charged with evaluating research proposals under that umbrella. We also strongly support other provisions included in both USICA and COMPETES that will foster broadening participation in STEM from under-represented groups and institutions, which address the serious problem of sexual harassment within STEM fields and that support expanded opportunities for STEM training and careers.

As scientists who rely heavily on federally produced and supported statistical data, we also applaud inclusion of the National Secure Data Service Act within COMPETES. The measure would authorize a Data Service demonstration project housed within the National Science Foundation to test and refine approaches to inform the implementation of a government-wide data linkage and access infrastructure. We strongly support these provisions and urge their inclusion in the final legislation.

Thank you for considering our views as you negotiate the final version of legislation to advance American leadership in research and innovation.

Sincerely,



Dr. Sonalde Desai
President
Population Association of America



Dr. Sara R, Curran
President
Association of Population Centers

Cc:

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
Chairman, Senate Space and Science Subcommittee

The Honorable Haley Stevens
Chair, House Subcommittee on Research and Technology

The Honorable Cynthia Lummis
Ranking Member, Senate Space and Science Subcommittee

The Honorable Randy Feenstra
Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on Research and Technology