

TO:

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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
Majority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Democratic Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear U.S. House Representatives,

The Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) -- the world's largest organization of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) researchers and practitioners -- opposes the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1806), introduced on April 15, 2015. Contrary to prior COMPETES legislation, Title 1 of H.R. 1806 authorizes NSF's research directorates individually. Ultimately, bill sponsors slash authorization levels for NSF's smallest directorate, the Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE), by almost 45% from its currently-funded level for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017. We are exceedingly concerned about the adverse impact that this bill, if passed, will have on important behavioral and cognitive research.

It is essential for NSF to have the ability to support behavioral and cognitive research to reduce the burden of mental illness. Scientific findings have repeatedly shown that behavioral and cognitive factors play a leading role in both the increased risk of, and reduction of, morbidity and mortality associated with mental illnesses and with many medical problems. Foundational behavioral and cognitive research, such as that historically funded by NSF, has strongly influenced behavioral intervention studies which have provided tremendous relief to sufferers and have cut morbidity and mortality rates for many devastating illnesses. These results would not have been possible without research support. Thus, increasing -- or at least maintaining -- the focus on behavioral and cognitive research will ultimately lead to further development of novel, efficacious, and effective approaches to identify, prevent, and treat mental illness.

We know this to be true based on the many 'success stories' from studies -- stories that have significantly advanced our knowledge of how to prevent and treat a wide range of mental illnesses. For example, research on cognitive deficits in schizophrenia led to the identification of specific neuroanatomical and functional abnormalities, which uncovered the biological bases of complex schizophrenia symptoms. The NSF itself has identified numerous behavioral and cognitive research priorities and is currently funding studies ranging from evolutionary functional changes in the parietal lobe, to diversity in the ability to self-

regulate one's behaviors, to studies of learning and decision-making. An ongoing NSF CAREER award offers funds to advance our understanding of the social cognitive deficits of autism, which would ultimately guide behavioral intervention strategies for this increasingly common and devastating condition. Furthermore, psychological scientists with NSF research funding address our most serious national challenges in the areas of public safety, national security, health, and education – and with high levels of methodological rigor and potential impact.

The Guiding Principles for the America COMPETES Act Reauthorization -- endorsed by over 130 scientific societies, colleges, universities, and private industry in 2013 -- stated that “to ensure our national competitiveness, we need to maintain a strong foundation of basic research across all scientific disciplines, from the physical, mathematical and life sciences, to engineering, to the social, economic, and behavioral sciences.” ABCT stands by the American Psychological Association's statement that drastically cutting support for entire disciplines of science in a time when multidisciplinary approaches are critically needed may imperil both the U.S. capacity to remain globally competitive and U.S. ability to engage in policy-making based on empirical data.

In summary, clinical psychological scientists stand ready to advance foundational behavioral and cognitive research. Doing so will also continue to advance the aims of biological scientists investigating the bases of mental illness, as well as the overall mission to discover and disseminate cost-effective prevention and cures for mental illness.

Sincerely,

The Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
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New York, NY 10001