

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities' Statement on America COMPETES Act Reauthorization Proposal

April 21, 2015

Washington, DC – The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) today released the following statement regarding H.R. 1806, which would reauthorize the America COMPETES Act. The House Science, Space and Technology Committee is scheduled to mark-up the bill tomorrow.

“From Neil Armstrong’s first steps on the moon to the smartphone in your hand, federal investments in basic scientific research have been behind our nation’s greatest achievements to advance society, save lives, and generate substantial economic growth. The America COMPETES Act serves as the roadmap for the future investments in basic scientific research – often conducted by our nation’s great research universities – needed to solve the next set of great challenges. This legislation should seek to meet our nation’s needs and greatest aspirations through the authorization of resources and policies that enable the development of new technologies and innovations that will leave Americans wondering how we ever lived without them.

“We are grateful for the significant time members of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee devote to thinking about how to best meet these challenges. We feel the first draft of the COMPETES Act does not provide what is needed both in terms of dollars and policy to unlock a vast array of scientific breakthroughs. However, under the leadership of Chairman Smith, the Committee has proven to be open to receiving input on its work. APLU looks forward to continuing discussions with the Committee on this legislation.

“As China, Germany, and other economic competitors dramatically increase their support of scientific research, the U.S. cannot continue its recent history of flat or modest increases. Only through strong, sustained investments will we be able to close this rising innovation deficit. While budget caps and sequestration currently limit the ability to provide such growth, the America COMPETES Act should look beyond the immediate horizon and lay out what funding levels should be for the U.S. to remain global innovation leader. This is the spirit of Rep. Hultgren’s amendment, which we support because doing so would signal our nation’s commitment to scientific research and also facilitate increases should the budget caps eventually be lifted. And investments should not discriminate among fields as the COMPETES Act does with significant cuts to the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences and Geosciences.

“Our concerns extend beyond funding levels. One of the great challenges of our time is climate change and the need for clean, efficient energy. Our nation’s research universities are conducting important research on advanced batteries, solar power, geothermal energy along with other areas, but this legislation would limit the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy

(ARPA-E) and remove the goal of developing technologies to reduce energy-related emissions. We urge the reversal of these provisions so that the U.S. can be a global leader, not a follower in the clean energy revolution.

“While we have real concerns with the substance of the COMPETES Act, we know the committee will listen to concerns and we look forward to working with Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Johnson and their colleagues to further shape this bill. We also look forward to working with the Senate as they craft their own version of this important legislation.”