

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4330

Dear Congresswoman Johnson:

The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) is concerned about certain provisions in the America Competes Reauthorization Act of 2016, H.R. 1806. The bill would seriously underfund discovery research supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science. The ASM supports strong funding across all disciplines of basic scientific research as a top national priority and urges Congress to provide steady and sustained growth in funding by setting robust authorization levels for the NSF and the DOE Office of Science.

The proposed legislation includes significant cuts in DOE funding for the energy and environmental sciences that provide knowledge to maintain the competitive leadership in innovation in the United States. The bill would seriously undermine important research supported by DOE grants and would adversely impact US innovation in large scale genomics, biofuels, and biotechnology. The proposed budget cuts would have lasting negative implications for energy and environmental R&D. The legislation includes the following reductions:

- Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) R&D – 29%, or \$466 million, below FY 15 appropriated levels and 50 percent below the President's FY 2016 base request level, and 91% below the President's full request level for EERE including the Administration's Opportunity, Security, and Growth Initiative (OGSI)
- ARPA-E – 50 percent of \$140 million below FY 2015 levels and 57 percent below the FY 2016 requested level.
- DOE Office of Science's Biological and Environmental Research Program (BER) – 7.1 percent or \$62.4 million below FY 2015 levels and 10.2 percent below the FY 2015 requested level.

The DOE has traditionally been a major funder of environmental and bioremediation research, supporting crucial advances in microbiology research and development relevant to soil microbial ecology. DOE funding has underwritten much of our current scientific understanding the role of microbes in the carbon cycle as related to the environment, as well as optimal methods to restore sites contaminated by chemical or radioactive materials.

DOE funding substantially boosts microbiology R&D in bio-based fuels, a promising alternative energy source that would be adversely impacted in the proposed bill. The legislation would limit BER climate science related initiatives and require BER to prioritize fundamental research on biological systems and genomics over climate and environmental research. The ASM

strongly disagrees with downgrading BER efforts in bioenergy and environmental sciences.

H.R. 1806 proposes to cut NSF Geosciences by 8 percent. The Geosciences Directorate funds important areas of discovery research, including ocean sciences, natural hazards research, space, weather and the polar programs. The Geosciences portfolio of research is essential to national and economic security and should not be decreased. The ASM is concerned about provisions that would have an adverse impact on NSF's peer review process, which is essential to funding meritorious research. In addition, the provision to set authorization levels by directorate will reduce NSF's ability to take advantage of new opportunities across disciplines.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed bill and urge Congress to reconsider the severe budget cuts and limitations included in this legislation which could have a negative impact on DOE BER and NSF discovery research. Ongoing R&D in the microbial sciences has wide ranging benefits that cannot be sustained without adequate federal support.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Donohue, Ph.D.
President, American Society for Microbiology

Ronald M. Atlas, Ph.D.
Chair, Public and Scientific Affairs Board

