



The Population Association of America (PAA) and the Association of Population Centers (APC) acknowledge the efforts of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology to promote the federal scientific research enterprise. However, our organizations oppose the current version of H.R. 1806, the *America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015*, and urge the committee to consider revising the bill before it is reported to the House of Representatives.

Specifically, our organizations are concerned about two of the bill's provisions that would do the following: authorize funding by directorate and reduce funding levels for the National Science Foundation (NSF)'s Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) by 45 percent below current funding levels in Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017.

H.R. 1806 departs from previous NSF authorizations by setting specific funding levels for individual directorates within the NSF. Currently, investments in research priorities are determined through a rigorous process that involves the technical expertise of NSF staff, a world-renowned merit review process and the input of scholars drawn from academic and private sector research institutions nationwide—all carried out under the auspices of the National Science Board, which was created for this purpose. Authorizing funding levels by directorate would interfere in NSF's ability to promote interdisciplinary research, limiting its flexibility to make targeted research investments and reallocate funds to support the most innovative and groundbreaking collaborative initiatives. Further, authorizing funding by directorate would politicize the scientific planning process, encouraging more competition among the directorates rather than promoting interdisciplinary collaboration.

We are also dismayed that H.R. 1806 mandates a draconian reduction of 45 percent in both FY 2016 and 2017 for NSF's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE). Although SBE represents a small fraction (5 percent) of the overall NSF budget, this directorate funds over half of all university-based social and behavioral science research. Cuts of this magnitude would compel the SBE Directorate to make difficult choices, including eliminating grants, programs, and staff and curtailing new scientific initiatives.

The NSF plays a pivotal role in setting a vital and forward-thinking research agenda. For example, in its FY 2016 budget, NSF proposed a new initiative to support research on resiliency. Population scientists are eager to capitalize on this opportunity and contribute to the broader understanding of the role resiliency plays in the aftermath of natural and manmade disasters. Without sufficient funding, however, all of the social and behavioral sciences, including population science, will be marginalized and potentially excluded from participating in such scientific initiatives.

We urge the committee to revise H.R. 1806 to address these concerns and ensure the NSF can continue to fulfill its mission to "advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense."

*The Population Association of America and the Association of Population Centers are two affiliated organizations that together represent over 3,000 population scientists—including demographers, economists, sociologists and statisticians and more than 40 federally-funded population research centers nationwide.*