

April 18, 2023

Krystal Ka'ai  
Executive Director  
White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

**RE: White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI)**

The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology is an international nonprofit scientific and educational organization that represents more than 11,000 students, researchers, educators and industry professionals. The ASBMB strongly advocates for strengthening the science, technology, engineering and mathematics workforce, supporting sustainable funding for the American research enterprise and ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion in STEM.

The ASBMB commends the White House for making significant efforts to make the American scientific workforce more equitable and for releasing 32 interagency plans as part of the national strategy to advance equity, justice and opportunity for members of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

The U.S. research ecosystem must be equitable and inclusive for every scientist regardless of their background, and Asian Americans in particular have faced many challenges recently, such as racial profiling resulting from the China Initiative, which prevented them from fully participating in the U.S. research enterprise. Many [Asian American scientists faced discrimination](#) that disrupted their careers and tarnished their reputations. Although the China Initiative has ended, racial profiling of and discrimination against Asian American scientists and students persists and harms the scientific enterprise.

The ASBMB supports the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy agency plan for prioritizing anti-discrimination by researching new and more effective strategies to reduce bias and xenophobia. The society also strongly encourages the White House to work with organizations such as Asian Americans Advancing Justice to develop solutions to remedy the negative consequences of the China Initiative.

To build on the OSTP's efforts and ensure the research enterprise is equitable, the ASBMB recommends that the office 1) determine — and make public — why the National Science Foundation funds disproportionately fewer grant applications from AANHPI investigators and 2) disaggregate data related to AANHPI communities so that disparities that exist aren't hidden or ignored.

**Recommendation 1: Determine — and make public — why the NSF funds disproportionately fewer grant applications from AANHPI investigators**

The ASBMB commends the NSF for establishing an internal racial equity task force charged with closing the funding gap between white and AANHPI investigators. The NSF's interagency plan focuses on investigating how many grant applications AANHPI investigators submit; however, a recent study already determined that at issue is that the [NSF awards disproportionately fewer grants to AANHPI investigators](#). The society certainly supports additional outreach to AANHPI investigators to be sure they're aware of funding opportunities and in fact suggests the NSF coordinate with AANHPI-serving colleges, universities and professional organizations to do that outreach. But, more importantly, the society encourages the NSF to determine why the success rate for AANHPI applicants is disproportionately low and, subsequently, publicly report the findings to the scientific community.

### **Recommendation 2: Disaggregate data related to AANHPI communities so that disparities that exist aren't hidden or ignored**

The ASBMB encourages the White House to push federal agencies to disaggregate data related to AANHPI educational attainment and research funding.

Agencies tend to aggregate data from all AANHPI communities, but doing so cloaks very real disparities that exist. For instance, while Chinese, Korean, Indian and Japanese Americans do not face lower levels of educational attainment and are not underrepresented in STEM, Hmong, Vietnamese, Filipino, Laotian and Cambodian Americans do and are. Aggregating data denies and misrepresents actual lived experiences and, importantly, disqualifies people who absolutely *should* qualify for diversity initiatives.

Furthermore, federal agencies must disaggregate AANHPI data to comply with President Joe Biden's Jan. 20, 2021, executive order titled "[Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government](#)." The [resulting recommendations](#) from the Equitable Data Working Group make very clear that disaggregated data "offers more precise statistical indicators of population well-being, as well as insight into who can and cannot access government programs and whether benefits and services are reaching underserved and underrepresented communities."

The ASBMB recommends that the White House consider using the language based upon stakeholder feedback from the [Office of Management](#) and request agencies update eligibility for their definitions for underrepresented groups.