

STATEMENT ON PASSAGE OF 21ST CENTURY CURES ACT

Statement from Benjamin Corb, public affairs director of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology:

"The ASBMB applauds Rep. Fred Upton, Rep. Diana DeGette, Sen. Lamar Alexander, and Sen. Patty Murray for their bipartisan cooperation in drafting, managing, and now passing the 21st Century Cures Act. And we applaud the bipartisan support from the Congress and the White House for biomedical research broadly – and the National Institutes of Health specifically. Although we have concerns over some provisions within the bill, we thank Congress for taking this important step towards supporting the biomedical research enterprise.

Today should mark the beginning – not the end – of Congressional actions aimed at supporting the nation's biomedical research enterprise. We strongly encourage both chambers to pass appropriations bills that adequately fund the NIH today, and into the future. Congress can start that process by avoiding the budget uncertainty caused by a series of continuing resolutions that damage the scientific enterprise, and passing an FY17 appropriations plan that provides needed increases to support NIH research not impacted by the Innovation Fund priorities in 21st Century Cures.

Further, those increases should not come at the expense of other critically important public health programs. Due to the discretionary spending caps established in the 2011 Budget Control Act, fiscal policy is artificially forced to be a 'zero sum game.' Thus, in order for the NIH to see the much needed increases in its budget, other programs in the Labor-Health and Human Services appropriations bills are forced to absorb cuts.

We strongly urge elimination of the discretionary spending caps to allow Congress the freedom to fund those programs appropriately – like the NIH – that have been identified as clear bipartisan priorities."