

**AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY**

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**STATEMENT ON 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CURES ACT DRAFT**

**ROCKVILLE, MD** – The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, an organization representing more than 12,000 scientists in the United States and globally, is pleased to see bipartisan action being taken to support the nation’s biomedical research enterprise. Today, the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee released its second draft of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act, a bill aimed at supporting the biomedical research enterprise in a meaningful way, and helping to more efficiently get next generation treatments from the laboratory to the patients that are most in need.

The draft legislation has several provisions which would affect the National Institutes of Health and is a marked improvement over the initial discussion draft circulated earlier this year. Specifically, some provisions which seemed to apply an unnecessary level of Congressional scrutiny over NIH strategic planning decisions and a section to improve the student loan repayment system are changes the community is happy to see in the latest draft. However, some revisions remain troubling.

“This draft is a bit of a mixed bag for the community,” said Benjamin Corb, public affairs director for ASBMB. “While the legislators listened to the biomedical research community in making some improvements from the previous draft bill, there remain some troubling provisions, and a lack of detail in other critical areas. Namely, while the proposal does authorize increases in spending at the NIH, it remains unclear as to how Congress will fund these increases. The House’s 302(b) allocations, which cut Labor-HHS appropriations spending by \$3.7 billion, leave many of us wondering how these increases are mathematically possible.”

Some troubling proposals include:

- Language supporting only young investigators. Currently, the NIH provides a great deal of assistance to young investigators to help begin their research careers, and these programs have succeeded at leveling the playing field for these scientists. While the problems faced by young scientists have not been entirely solved, the current language puts too much focus on young investigators at the expense of mid- and late-career investigators who are still making important contributions to the research enterprise.
- Language supporting an emeritus funding mechanism. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the bill looks to codify a proposal floated by NIH leadership earlier this year to offer funding for late-career investigators to help end their research programs and transition to a different role. And without increases in the NIH’s overall budget, it’s likely funding for this program would come at the expense of early- and mid-career scientists. The ASBMB and several other groups formally rejected this proposal during the NIH’s request for information period earlier in the spring. It’s troubling to see the language show up in this draft legislation

For more details, and further analysis of the proposal, ASBMB invites you to visit our policy blog at [policy.asbmb.org](http://policy.asbmb.org).

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