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USA

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Office of Public Affairs

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May 22, 2013

The Honorable Lamar Smith  
United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Science, Space and Technology  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The High Quality Research Act, a draft proposal which has been drafted by your committee, poses a clear threat to the nation's long established and unmatched scientific enterprise, and would unnecessarily politicize the long respected process by which this nation funds scientific research, the peer-review process.

The American biomedical and biological research enterprise has made the U.S. the unquestioned global leader in scientific innovation and productivity. The peer-review system is one of the crucial pillars of this research enterprise. Peer review is a rigorous, multi-tiered process by which applications for funding are reviewed by other scientists and scored based on scientific merit and innovation. This system ensures that only the most scientifically meritorious ideas and concepts receive federal funding. Peer review is used by every major federal funder of scientific research, including the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, and it is largely free of fraud and conflict of interest. The output of peer review is the major factor for program staff at these agencies in making funding decisions. These program staff are also trained scientists who are deeply knowledgeable about the fields of science for which they are responsible.

The nature of scientific research makes knowing the outcome of proposed experiments impossible, and the benefits may be realized only years or decades after it was conducted. This proposal places an additional burden on investigators and program staff to prove the value of their research before conclusions can be reached and is contrary to the scientific method. Nevertheless, due to the peer-review process, the American public can be assured that the work done with their tax money is the most likely to provide a scientific or health benefit for the nation.

Currently, less than one in seven grants submitted to the NIH or NSF receive funding. This is indicative of the degree of competition and high quality of the proposed research. The ASBMB wholly supports the work of scientists who have endured the rigors of peer-review and been awarded funding. Likewise, the ASBMB opposes any attempt by Congress or other entity to undermine peer review through judgment of grant applications based on attributes other than scientific merit.

Specifically, the ASBMB strongly opposes the High Quality Research Act and any act that so fecklessly damages the peer review process, as well as any attempt to politicize peer-reviewed science. Should you have any questions or comments, please direct them to ASBMB's public affairs director, Benjamin Corb, who can be reached at 240.283.6625 or via e-mail at [bcorb@asbmb.org](mailto:bcorb@asbmb.org).

Respectfully,

Jeremy M. Berg  
President

cc: House Space, Science and Technology Committee