



May 20, 2020

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand  
478 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Cory Gardner  
354 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Edward Markey  
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Senator Marco Rubio  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senators Gillibrand, Gardner, Markey, and Rubio:

On behalf of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), one of the largest life science societies composed of more than 30,000 scientists and health professionals, thank you for introducing the “Bioeconomy Research and Development Act of 2020.” We support the goals of this legislation, including the creation of a national initiative to advance engineering biology, as well as provisions to strengthen the ability to translate scientific discoveries into tools, technologies, and therapies that benefit society, our economy, and the world at large.

The central importance of the microbial sciences to understanding the world around us and solving major problems of our time cannot be overstated. Thanks to past investments in basic research, we now understand that microbial communities exist on, in, and around people, plants, animals, soil, oceans, and the atmosphere, thus making microbiology and concepts like the microbiome relevant to almost everything. The rapid pace of discovery has demonstrated a need for better cross-agency coordination, greater technology needs and data sharing infrastructure.

This legislation is particularly timely as microbiologists are racing to develop diagnostic testing, vaccines, and treatments for COVID-19. Microbiology is a highly interdisciplinary field, made stronger when federal agencies and stakeholders work in a coordinated manner to advance research, technology development, and infrastructure. As a diverse Society that represents scientists and health professionals working across the spectrum of the microbial sciences and in multiple sectors of society, we appreciate the bill’s efforts to facilitate collaboration, cross-agency funding, database curation, and the development of novel tools to accelerate translational research.

We also appreciate the bill’s recognition that the success in engineering biology, like other disciplines, depends on an inclusive and diverse workforce and a strong pipeline. ASM is committed to the development of the next generation of researchers who will carry the torch in to the future.

Thank you again for your leadership. Should you have questions or require additional information, please contact ASM’s Director of Public Policy Allen Segal at (202) 942-9294 or [asegal@asmusa.org](mailto:asegal@asmusa.org).

Sincerely,

Stacey Schultz-Cherry, Ph.D.  
Chair, Public and Scientific Affairs Committee  
American Society for Microbiology

Stefano Bertuzzi, Ph.D., MPH  
CEO  
American Society for Microbiology