



AMERICAN
SOCIETY FOR
MICROBIOLOGY

April 20, 2022

Dear Designated Conferees:

The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) appreciates the ongoing bipartisan efforts in Congress to ensure robust and sustained support for research and innovation in an increasingly competitive global environment. As a global scientific society with more than 30,000 members in the United States and around the world whose mission is to promote and advance the microbial sciences, ASM thanks you for your leadership and bipartisan commitment to fundamental research, world-class scientific facilities, and workforce development efforts carried out by the federal science agencies.

A viable future for our planet depends on science and technology, and microbiologists will play a key role. We encourage Congress to consider basic research as fundamental to innovation, and to break down silos across disciplines which serve as systemic barriers to progress. In addition, we look forward to working with you to address some provisions included in the legislation that could have unintended, harmful impacts on research involving viral pathogens.

As Congress begins the conference process to reconcile the differences between the America COMPETES Act and the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA), ASM encourages the conferees to quickly reach consensus. The final package must include provisions that result in a sustainable research and innovation strategy capable of tackling ongoing and emerging societal challenges, increase funding for fundamental scientific research, bolster the scientific workforce, and enact meaningful policies to amplify the real-world impact of federal funding.

Specifically, ASM supports the inclusion of the following provisions in the conference legislation:

- **The DOE (Department of Energy) Science for the Future Act (S. 3699) recognizes the fundamental importance of the microbial sciences and provides robust and sustained funding increases across the major research areas.** DOE's Office of Science and National Laboratories support foundational scientific research and play an instrumental role in advancing microbiology research. DOE-funded microbial research is integral to addressing the grand societal challenge of climate change, including the development of alternative energies, wastewater treatment solutions, and myriad other biotechnology solutions that advance the bioeconomy and benefit society. Additionally, their facilities are global leaders in genome sequencing and genomic science, enabling advanced analysis of microbes and microbiomes, which are key to unlocking climate change solutions and discovering emerging pathogens. Programs such as the Joint Genome Institute and the National Microbiome Data Collaborative provide next-level opportunities for collaboration and coordination of data across federal agencies and projects.
- **The NSF (National Science Foundation) for the Future Act** affirms the committee's commitment to maintaining American leadership in science and technology. Microbes are the foundation of scientific discovery, and the NSF is a key supporter of microbial science research. NSF funding has supported fundamental research into microbiomes, discovery of emerging pathogens, and the promotion of global collaboration.

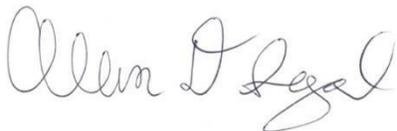
- **The Bioeconomy Research and Development Act** will facilitate interagency coordination as well as a broad research, development, and demonstration program focused on engineering biology to advance biofuel and bioproduct development, biobased materials, and environmental remediation as well as support for new facilities, tools, and instruments to advance both fundamental research and commercial applications. Unlike other developed nations, the U.S. has not developed a cross-sector plan for the bioeconomy.
- **Legislation to combat harassment and address racial and ethnic diversity will promote an equitable and inclusive scientific workforce.** ASM strongly encourages continued commitment to addressing the pervasive problems of discrimination and harassment in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematical fields. Federal science agencies must embrace and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in science, as it is inextricably tied to scientific advancement.

While ASM supports the aforementioned provisions in the bill, **we caution against legislative provisions that would restrict, pause, or alter federally funded research projects that focus on gain of function research of concern or specific pathogens.** We appreciate Congress's recognition that access, security, and ethical stewardship of federally funded research are paramount, but policies must strike the appropriate balance between national security, biosafety, and an open, collaborative scientific environment through which potentially lifesaving research can be conducted. As written, provisions in the House and Senate-passed versions of the DOE Science for the Future Act could have significant and harmful impacts on our ability to address ongoing and emerging infectious diseases.

On behalf of ASM and its members, thank you again for introducing this important legislation. The Society stands ready to collaborate with you as the legislative process moves forward. If you have any questions, please contact Amalia Corby, Senior Federal Affairs Officer, at acorby@asmusa.org.

Sincerely,

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Allen D. Segal
Chief Advocacy Officer
American Society for Microbiology