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The Honorable Charles Schumer  
 Majority Leader  
 United States Senate  
 S-221, United States Capitol  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
 Speaker  
 United States House of Representatives  
 H-232, United States Capitol  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
 Minority Leader  
 United States Senate  
 S-230, United States Capitol  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
 Minority Leader  
 United States House of Representatives  
 H-204, United States Capitol  
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, House Minority Leader McCarthy, Senate Majority Leader Schumer, and Senate Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the Coalition for the Life Sciences (CLS), we applaud Congress for reaffirming the Nation’s commitment to science, research, and innovation by passing the America COMPETES Act in the House and the US Innovation and Competition Act (USICA) in the Senate. The CLS asks for your continued leadership to move the conference process along quickly towards a final bill.

It is a true testament to your determination and commitment to establish a bipartisan conference committee aimed at building and investing in the US science and technology (S&T) enterprise. Now you must complete the process. Congress has the opportunity to assure US S&T leadership for generations to come. Recent studies have shown that the US is falling behind global competitors in government investment in S&T. A final bill that includes the best of both USICA and COMPETES will unleash our nation’s potential and allow us to outcompete any other nation, develop the next generation of talented STEM leaders, respond to urgent societal challenges in health, energy, environment and food, and protect US investments from economic and foreign threats.

We ask that authorizers work in concert with appropriators to ensure that essential federal investments are provided in any final bill. Without real money that supports the vision and goals provided in both bills, we simply cannot compete on a global level.

As conferees work swiftly, but thoughtfully, on bridging the differences in the two bills, the CLS urges you to consider several crucial provisions in the final package.

<b>The American Society for Cell Biology</b> (301) 347-9300 <a href="http://www.ascb.org">www.ascb.org</a>	<b>American Society of Human Genetics</b> (301) 634-7300 <a href="http://www.ashg.org">www.ashg.org</a>	<b>Chan Zuckerberg Initiative</b> <a href="http://www.chanzuckerberg.com">www.chanzuckerberg.com</a>	<b>Genentech, a Member of the Roche Group</b> (650) 467-6617 <a href="http://www.gene.com">www.gene.com</a>	<b>The Genetics Society of America</b> (301) 634-7300 <a href="http://www.genetics-gsa.org">www.genetics-gsa.org</a>	<b>Howard Hughes Medical Institute</b> (301) 215-8500 <a href="http://www.hhmi.org">www.hhmi.org</a>	<b>HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology</b> (256) 327-0425 <a href="http://www.hudsonalpha.org">www.hudsonalpha.org</a>	<b>Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research</b> (617) 871-4110 <a href="http://www.nibr.org">www.nibr.org</a>	<b>Society for Neuroscience</b> (202) 962-4000 <a href="http://www.sfn.org">www.sfn.org</a>
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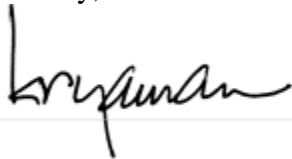
- The House COMPETES Act provides a pathway for international STEM talent to stay in the US after graduation. Section 80303 would exempt immigrants with PhDs in STEM fields from annual green card limits, allowing them an opportunity to obtain permanent residence in the United States without being subject to the green card backlog. Including this section in a final bill is essential for the US's ability to attract and retain top international students.
- Reauthorization of the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, as included in COMPETES. Together these sections invest in the fundamental discovery research that drives transformational innovation and is vital to maintaining the US leadership in S&T.
- Broadening the STEM workforce is an essential priority addressed in both the House and Senate bills. However COMPETES offers a more comprehensive approach that includes combatting sexual harassment on college campuses and extending opportunities for those historically underrepresented in STEM, including support to minority serving institutions of higher education.

In finalizing the agreement, the CLS also strongly urges you to reject the following provisions.

- Section 6102 in USICA requires NIH to establish national security policies for human genome and any other identifiable, sensitive participant information from NIH supported research. Rather than imposing a mandate on the NIH at this time, we propose that you commission a study from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM), which would include scientists, engineers and security experts to examine the issue and make recommendations.
- Both the USICA and COMPETES bills include language banning gain-of-function research. This research should be subject to evaluation, and regulation as deemed appropriate, by scientists, bioethicists and national security experts, not governed by politics, such as the work done by NASEM in 2014. Continued or expanded constructive transparency and evaluation is, we believe, preferred over short-sighted prohibitions and moratoriums.

Thank you for considering our positions and for your continued efforts on these very important pieces of legislation. We look forward to working with you to advance a final agreement on a bipartisan innovation and competition bill.

Sincerely,



Keith R. Yamamoto  
Chair, Coalition for the Life Sciences  
Vice Chancellor for Science Policy and Strategy, UCSF  
Director, UCSF Precision Medicine  
Vice Dean for Research, School of Medicine  
Professor, Cellular & Molecular Pharmacology

