

June 12, 2015

The Honorable Fred Upton
U.S. House of Representatives
Energy & Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette
U.S. House of Representatives
Energy & Commerce Committee
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Pitts
U.S. House of Representatives
Energy & Commerce Committee
420 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
U.S. House of Representatives
Energy & Commerce Committee
237 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
U.S. House of Representatives
Energy & Commerce Committee
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton, Chairman Pitts, and Ranking Members Pallone Green and DeGette:

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) thanks you and your staff for your monumental efforts on H.R. 6, the 21st Century Cures Act, and commends the Energy & Commerce Committee for advancing this critical, bipartisan bill. Your inclusive approach and willingness to solicit input from the stakeholder community throughout the 21st Century Cures process should serve as a model for future transformative initiatives.

FASEB is comprised of 27 member societies which collectively represent over 120,000 biological and biomedical science researchers. As such, we greatly appreciate the addition of language reauthorizing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at increased levels of appropriations for three years. These authorized appropriations, together with the new, mandatory NIH Innovation Fund, represent significant progress toward the sustained, predictable funding that is paramount to maintaining a productive biomedical enterprise.

However, there are areas in which FASEB believes the bill could do more to support the environment of discovery and innovation at NIH. For example, in previous letters to the committee, dated [4 March](#) and [9 April](#), we recommended granting NIH multi-year budget authority. Because of its one-year budget cycle, compounded by delays in passage of appropriations bills, NIH currently returns nearly one percent of its budget, or \$300 million, to the United States Treasury every year. Other federal research agencies with the ability to carry over funding into the next fiscal year, including the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, and the Department of Veteran Affairs Medical and Prosthetic

Research Program, largely avoid the forfeiture of funds experienced by NIH. **FASEB encourages you to extend the flexibility and benefits of multi-year budget authority to NIH through H.R. 6.**

Furthermore, although we are extremely grateful for the additional funds provided to NIH through the Innovation Fund, we ask the committee to afford NIH greater flexibility in the allocation of Fund dollars to ensure that the most meritorious research is supported.

Additionally, FASEB asks that the committee take stronger actions to remove the barriers to participation of federal researchers at scientific conferences and meetings. We appreciate the sentiment provided by the Sense of Congress statement on travel. However, it does nothing to alleviate the limits on conference budgets and attendance at scientific meetings that have led to a substantial decrease in participation by federal researchers—some of whom are missing out on essential (and often required) opportunities for professional development. Moreover, as NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, mentioned during a March 10, 2015 Senate HELP Committee hearing, current travel approval processes are extremely costly and have demonstrated “little, if any, added value.” An article in Bloomberg Business reports that NIH spends more on oversight of travel regulations than it does on researching Hodgkin’s disease. While FASEB supports the efficient and responsible use of federal resources, we are concerned that continued implementation of current regulations will impede the ability of researchers to interact with key agency personnel and of federal agencies to perform their oversight responsibilities and recruit the best and brightest scientists. **FASEB recommends that the committee work with research agencies to mitigate the burden of the travel restrictions on federal scientists, ideally through an exemption for federal researchers from these restrictions.** Such language was included, for example, in the original text of the Senate Labor-HHS Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2015.

FASEB thanks the Energy & Commerce Committee for making research a national priority in H.R. 6. We share your commitment to ensuring that the United States remains the world leader in biomedical innovation. We urge you to make the additional changes noted above to ensure that the 21st Century Cures Act achieves its goal of stimulating and sustaining a new era of discovery, and encourage the House leadership to bring this bill to the floor without delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joseph R. Haywood", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joseph R. Haywood, PhD
President