



November 22, 2019

House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
H2-359 Ford Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ref: Question 12 on RFI from Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

Members of the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) appreciates the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis soliciting input from a broad range of stakeholders on how best to address our changing climate. AAAS is the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the *Science* family of journals, with the mission to advance science, engineering and innovation throughout the world for the benefit of all people. We have long taken the position that policymakers cannot afford to dismiss or ignore the overwhelming scientific evidence of climate change. The science on climate is clear, and we must face the facts in order to address the risks.

Our comments will be limited to Question 12 in the RFI: Regarding Climate Information Support. AAAS fully supports the National Climate Assessment and the work of scientists at federal agencies, national labs and academic institutions who provide significant research findings that increase our understanding of how climate change is affecting the United States. A fundamental and impactful element of the National Climate Assessment has been the inclusion of regional chapters in every NCA (2000, 2009, 2014, 2018) that are not mandated within the Global Change Research Act.

For example, within the NCA, regions such as the Northeast, Midwest, Great Plains and Pacific Islands are provided a more localized understanding of how climate change impacts their own regions in comparison to other climate reports that focus solely on national or global perspectives. Because the impacts of climate change may include substantial variance among regions (e.g., temperatures are expected to rise more rapidly in the northern U.S.; sea level rise will be greater along the Gulf Coast because it is coupled with sinking land; the northern U.S. will experience more winter and spring precipitation while the southwest will receive less), this regional breakdown allows states and local communities across the nation to assess how a changing climate impacts them more directly – helping these communities understand the local and imminent nature of climate risks and devise more informed local solutions.

Understanding the importance of this, AAAS has also undertaken our own recent initiative titled How We Respond to highlight the ways U.S. communities are actively and effectively responding to climate change, in particular at the local, state and regional levels, and the critical role that science and scientists serve in developing their responses.

However, despite the importance and effectiveness of breaking the NCA down into regions, this component is not mandatory in statute and thus is susceptible to changes that could be made to the assessment in future iterations. Due to its usefulness to the nation and local communities =, Congress should codify the provision of regional-level information in the

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NCA in order that regions across the country can continue reaping the benefits of scientific information into how climate change impacts their communities.

Similarly, while the National Climate Assessment has grown in its scope and continues to improve in its coverage of the impacts of and responses to climate change, many topics that have been included in previous assessments may be vulnerable to removal from future assessments. Congress should expand their direction of the NCA to include the intersection of the science of climate change with other multidisciplinary areas, including:

- Economics and financial systems
- Built infrastructure (beyond transportation systems, which are currently included)
- Communities at high risk from the impacts of climate change (e.g., indigenous communities, urban communities, etc.)
- Responses to climate change, such as mitigation and adaptation

Scientifically accurate information builds the foundation for public policies that promote the well-being of people and communities. AAAS thanks the committee for seeking the input from stakeholders on this critical issue. We will continue to implore decision-makers at all levels – local, state, regional and national – to use scientific evidence as they seek opportunities for communities to respond effectively to climate change. AAAS and the scientific community stand ready to help inform the select committee and other policy- and decision-makers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alan I. Leshner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Alan I. Leshner
Interim Chief Executive Officer