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The Honorable John D. Rockefeller, IV
Chairman, Senate Commerce, Science and
Transportation Committee
254 Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rockefeller,

On behalf of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the largest multidisciplinary science society in the world, we would like to thank you and your colleagues for introducing the reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act.

Last year, AAAS signed, along with leading representatives of the business, higher education, and scientific and engineering communities, a set of "Guiding Principles" regarding the reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act. In that statement we emphasized the importance of "steady and sustained real growth in funding" and the need "to maintain a strong foundation of basic research across all scientific disciplines."

Your bill reflects this principle and would help key agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to sustain support for basic research across a broad spectrum of disciplines over the next five years. The investments made today in research and education by agencies such as NSF will pay large dividends in our nation's future as an innovative and competitive society.

Furthermore, we applaud that the bill recognizes the value of a rigorous merit-review process for assessing research proposals, as well as the need to reduce the administrative burdens and associated costs of federal research grants. On this last point, AAAS is encouraged by the recognition by both chambers of Congress and the executive branch that administrative burdens pose a growing challenge, and we encourage policy-makers to work in bipartisan fashion to address this critical issue.

Finally, there are many other laudatory elements within the bill, including sections on broadening participation, STEM education, and programs to advance innovation.

We recognize that Congress faces many competing priorities as it formulates matters related to the budget and thus we applaud your leadership in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Alan I. Leshner