April 7, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell:

The undersigned organizations appreciate Congress' long-standing bipartisan support for biomedical research. We also respect that oversight of research with biosafety and national security ramifications is in the best of interest of science and the nation.

As Congress negotiates far-reaching legislation focused on advancing American competitiveness through a stronger investment in federal science agencies and programs, **we urge Congress to remove legislative provisions that would restrict, pause, or alter federally funded research projects that focus on gain of function research of concern or specific pathogens.** Such an approach through legislation is overly prescriptive and interferes with the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity's (NSABB) evaluation of and forthcoming recommendations on enhanced potential pandemic pathogen research (EPPP) and dual use research of concern (DURC).

Established to review and advise the federal government on biosafety and biosecurity in research, including DURC and more recently, EPPP research, NSABB has the requisite scientific expertise to address these issues. Its work is essential to formulating the most effective policies for the future as we move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for future seasonal and pandemic threats. The NSABB convened on February 28, 2022 to discuss a new, expanded charge and the path forward.

We believe it is appropriate for these polices and frameworks to be re-evaluated considering lessons learned in the current pandemic and with an eye toward both international engagement and the appropriate balance between biosecurity and the lifesaving value of this research. These efforts include the NSABB revision of definitions and consideration of pathogens classified under DURC and EPPP, and appropriately assessing research benefits with risks.

We also believe the process' inclusion of public and stakeholder input is a critical component to this evaluation because ensuring an appropriate degree of transparency in carrying out the process is important to building trust with the public and the scientific community.

Through collaboration with NSABB, Congress can strike an appropriate balance between safeguarding national security and public health through biosafety and biosecurity measures, while also recognizing the global impact of potential pandemic pathogens, the value and lifesaving potential of research in this area, and the need to study these microbes to address current and future threats. Doing otherwise could have serious, negative unintended consequences for potentially lifesaving research. They would harm the very ecosystem that developed the novel tests, vaccines, and medical countermeasures that have brought us through the pandemic.

We encourage Congress to continue exercising its oversight responsibilities and avoid legislative provisions that would pause or even halt research projects focused on specific viruses, ban specific techniques, or restrict collaboration in specific areas of the world. We thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Virology
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Biophysical Society
Coalition for the Life Sciences
Duke Health
Duke University
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Michigan State University
National Association for Biomedical Research
North American Vascular Biology Organization
Research!America
University of Louisville
University of Michigan
University of Washington