

December 9, 2011

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Howard P. McKeon
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Levin, Senator McCain, Chairman McKeon and Representative Smith:

As you proceed with the conference on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (HR 1540/ S 1867), the undersigned scientific and professional societies, higher education associations, universities, and research institutions strongly urge you to oppose using the Defense Authorization Bill as the vehicle by which to reauthorize the Small Business Research Innovation (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.

As you are aware, the Senate attached the Senate version of the SBIR/STTR reauthorization bill to their version of the Defense Authorization bill. There is, however, a provision in the Senate SBIR/STTR reauthorization proposal that would divert funds from existing and important basic research programs at key research agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. Given that negotiations are currently underway between the House and Senate on a comprehensive SBIR/STTR reauthorization bill, and that this bill clearly will impact agencies and programs well beyond those overseen by the Department of Defense, we believe that it is inappropriate to address this issue in the National Defense Authorization Act.

We support the participation of small businesses in scientific research and recognize that the SBIR/STTR program is a critical component that feeds the innovation pipeline resulting in today's medical and other technological advances. However, a mandatory increase in the SBIR/STTR allocation across federal agencies (as proposed by the Senate) will result in funding cuts for investigator initiated peer-reviewed grants that are the cornerstone of the nation's research enterprise. This fundamental research creates discoveries that improve our quality of life and which contribute to our country's economic growth. We are especially concerned that the proposed increase in the SBIR/STTR allocation would be implemented as the budgets of the federal science agencies are likely to shrink or at best remain flat. Furthermore, a mandatory increase in the SBIR/STTR allocations takes flexibility away from the agencies at a time when agency directors are being asked to use fewer resources more efficiently and make increasingly difficult choices. We do not believe it is the best interest of scientific advancement to redirect funds to one research program at the expense of other equally important national research priorities in the current environment.

We urge you to remove the controversial SBIR/STTR reauthorization proposal from the National Defense Authorization Act so that the ongoing negotiations on this important issue can continue until a more satisfactory resolution is reached.

Sincerely,

American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Immunologists
American Association of Medical Colleges
American Association of Universities
American Gastroenterological Association
American Mathematical Society
American Physiological Society
American Psychological Association
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics
American Society of Human Genetics
American Statistical Association
Arizona State University
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land Grant Universities
Brown University
Coalition for the Life Sciences
Columbia University
Computing Research Association
California Institute of Technology
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Duke University
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Indiana University
Iowa State University
Johns Hopkins University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Penn Medicine
Penn State College of Medicine
Population Association of America
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center
Society for the Study of Reproduction
University at Buffalo
University of California
University of Delaware
University of Michigan
University of Rochester

University of Southern California
University of Utah Health Sciences
University of Vermont
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Vanderbilt University
Yale University

cc: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
Speaker John Boehner
House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
Senate Armed Services Committee
Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee
House Armed Services Committee
House Small Business Committee
House Science, Space and Technology Committee