TASK FORCE ON AMERICAN INNOVATION

August 12, 2015

The Honorable Cory Gardner   The Honorable Gary Peters
Committee on Commerce,   Committee on Commerce, Transportation
Transportation and Science   and Science
United States Senate   United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510   Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Gardner and Peters:

On behalf of the Task Force on American Innovation (TFAI), we wish to thank you for soliciting input as you consider how the Committee on Commerce, Transportation and Science should proceed with reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act. TFAI is an alliance of America's leading companies and business associations, research university associations, and scientific societies that advocates on behalf of federal funding of basic research in the physical sciences and engineering.

As you consider any COMPETES legislation, we urge you to keep in mind these points:

- Federal investments in research continue to lay the groundwork for new industries, new companies, and new jobs for Americans. Indeed, technological innovation, much of which emerges from advances based on federally funded research, has long been responsible for a significant portion of the country's economic growth.

- Innovation is therefore critical to economic security, and economic security is essential to national security. Our economic competitors in Asia and Europe are steadily and significantly increasing their investments in scientific research, with the aim of seizing global leadership in science and innovation, a role played by the United States for more than two-thirds of a century.

- America COMPETES has provided the nation with a strong, coherent vision for advancing innovation and economic competitiveness, and TFAI believes any reauthorization of COMPETES should be consistent with that vision. Accordingly, as you consider COMPETES legislation, we urge you to provide strong and sustainable authorization levels for the key agencies under COMPETES. We also urge you to provide for an authorization of meaningful length, preferably a five-year authorization, in order to encourage predictability and stability for the agencies and the science community.

- Further, we urge that COMPETES legislation make clear that federally funded research should be guided by the best science – and not by politics. Given the complexity of the research ecosystem, where advances in one area of science can drive breakthroughs in seemingly unrelated fields, it is imperative that the full range of scientific inquiry be supported, and not curtailed, in any legislation.

We are attaching two documents that reflect the broad-based support among industry, scientific, and higher education organizations for strong, sustained support of federally funded research:

1. A statement of principles for reauthorization of America COMPETES endorsed by a wide range of business, higher education, and science organizations, including TFAI; the TFAI endorsement, consistent with the coalition's purpose, is focused on the funding principles;

2. The recent "Innovation: An American Imperative" statement, signed by leading industry CEOs and endorsed by over 200 industry, science, and university organizations, which demonstrates significant, broad-based support for steady and sustained real annual growth in funding of at least four percent for scientific research; as the statement declares, this level of investment would help stave off an innovation deficit and ensure that the U.S. remains the global innovation leader.

We also commend to you a brochure prepared by this task force that highlights many of the ways in which research supported by key federal agencies, including the COMPETES agencies, continues to pay huge dividends to the American people and our economy.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to provide this input to you, and we stand ready to work with you on any legislation developed by your committee.

Sincerely,

Brian Raymond
Director, Technology and Domestic
Economic Policy
National Association of Manufacturers
Co-Chair, Task Force on American Innovation

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Texas Instruments
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