

July 30, 2019

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chairwoman, Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Ranking Member, Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Johnson and Ranking Member Lucas:

On behalf of 8,000 members of the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG), I wish to convey the Society's strong support of H.R. 2528, the *STEM Opportunities Act of 2019*. With the foresight that a leading U.S. research enterprise requires full engagement of the entire STEM talent pool, H.R. 2528 aims to establish inclusive policies and recommendations in Federal science agencies and grantee institutions. ASHG endorses H.R. 2528 as it aligns with our commitment to diversity both in the research workforce and in research participation.

ASHG is the primary professional membership organization for human genetics specialists worldwide. The Society's membership includes researchers, clinicians, genetic counselors, laboratory practice professionals, nurses, and others who have a special interest in human genetics. Our members work in a wide range of settings, including universities, hospitals, institutes, biotech companies, the pharmaceutical industry, and medical and research laboratories.

A survey by the National Science Foundation reported that since 2002 the number of women awarded doctorates exceed men by a small percentage. In 2016, women earned 55% of doctorates in life sciences. Yet, only 25% of full professors at the top research universities are women. Even worse, only 6% of tenure-track STEM faculty are from underrepresented minority groups. As the world's largest professional membership organization for human genetics and genomics specialists, our shared mission is to advance the field for the betterment of all facets of society. Our community has long recognized that medical research data must better reflect the diversity of the population so that all people fully realize the benefits of medicine—a goal of NIH's All of Us. The scientific workforce should also reflect that same rich diversity and in turn engender a more inclusive and engaged public in research participation.

Diversity and inclusion are embodied in the Society's core value and programming framework. In partnership with the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), ASHG has launched the Human Genetics Scholars Initiative Program to recruit and retain scientists from underrepresented groups in the

research community. This year's Annual Meeting will provide trainees and professionals from underrepresented groups with mentoring opportunities, as well as forums on best practices to promote diversity and inclusion at research institutions, and events celebrating the importance of diversity. ASHG has also established a Diversity and Inclusion Task Force that will recommend an action plan to address diversity in the genetics and genomics research workforce and in research participation.

H.R. 2528 directs the Office of Science and Technology Policy to implement policy recommendations and programs to include the following: increase awareness and reduce barriers restricting recruitment and retention of women, minorities and other groups underrepresented in STEM careers; minimize the impact of implicit bias in the grant review process; track demographics of STEM faculty; and develop guidance and workshops to address systemic barriers in partnership with the National Science Foundation. In an increasingly competitive global environment, these measures can only strengthen our Nation's standing as a leader in research and development.

Thank you for introducing this legislation and for your strong leadership on this issue. If the ASHG can be of additional service, please contact Derek Scholes, ASHG senior director of policy and advocacy dscholes@ashg.org who can coordinate further discussion about these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Wynshaw-Boris', written in a cursive style.

Anthony Wynshaw-Boris, MD, PhD
President-Elect