May 13, 2016

Dear Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Thornberry, and Ranking Member Smith:

The 77 undersigned scientific and professional societies, higher education associations, universities, and research institutions strongly urge you to oppose using the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), HR 4909, as the vehicle by which to reauthorize the Small Business Research Innovation (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.

Although the SBIR and STTR are authorized through September of 2017, an effort is currently underway to renew these programs. Legislation containing controversial provisions 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 has been approved by the House and Senate Small Business Committees but is still pending in the House Science Committee which also has jurisdiction over the SBIR/STTR programs. Given that the proposed legislation clearly will impact agencies and programs well beyond those overseen by the Department of Defense, it is inappropriate to address this issue in the NDAA.

As the attached letter notes, we support and encourage the participation of small businesses in scientific research and recognize that the SBIR and STTR programs are an important component of the innovation pipeline that produces today’s medical and other advances. However, a mandatory increase in the SBIR/STTR allocation as proposed in the pending House and Senate bills will result in fewer research opportunities for investigators in colleges and universities, nonprofit research institutes, and other dynamic research institutions. Located in nearly every district across the nation, researchers in these settings are the primary contributors to scientific progress. Their work is the cornerstone of the nation’s research enterprise and makes the major discoveries that improve quality of life and contribute to our country’s economic growth. Furthermore, the proposed increase in the SBIR/STTR set-aside would be implemented when future funding levels for the federal science agencies are very uncertain.

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. Reauthorization of the SBIR/STTR programs should be achieved through “regular order” – not through the FY 2017 NDAA.

Sincerely,

Addiction Medicine Foundation
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Association for Cancer Research
American Association for Dental Research
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Immunologists
American Brain Coalition
American College of Rheumatology
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Physiological Society
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology
American Society of Human Genetics
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Statistical Association
Association for Surgical Education
Association of Academic Physiatrists
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Anatomy Cell Biology Neurobiology Chairs
Association of Chairs of Departments of Physiology
Association of Independent Research Institutes
Association of Medical and Graduate Departments of Biochemistry (AMGDB)
Association of Population Centers
Association of Psychologists in Academic Health Centers (APAHC)
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of Surgical Education
Biophysical Society
Brandeis University
Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
Coalition for the Life Sciences
Columbia University
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Duke University
Emory University
Endocrine Society
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Genetics Society of America
Indiana University
Medical College of Wisconsin