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Secretary Ashton Carter
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Secretary Ernest Moniz Department of Energy 1000 Independence Ave., SW Washington, DC 20585

Administrator Charles Bolden NASA Headquarters Suite 5R30 Washington, DC 20546

Dear Secretary Carter, Secretary Moniz and Administrator Bolden:

A recent study by the National Science Foundation found that women continue to lag behind men in academic and professional advancement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Out of concern that gender bias is inhibiting women and girls from participating in STEM education and career fields, we recently asked the GAO to examine federal agency efforts to address gender discrimination. The request includes reviewing demographic data regarding federal grant-making to women and men for research in STEM fields to determine whether there are differences in success rate, size of grants awarded and other factors which may impact the likelihood of success or the award size.

The preliminary report from GAO shows that the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, and NASA do not collect data that could be used to analyze demographic differences, if any, in the awarding of federal grants in the STEM fields. Given that collectively, research grants awarded to colleges and universities by your three agencies represents well over \$3 billion in federal funds in 2014, it is important for us to know whether any gender or other bias might exist in the decision making processes involved in awarding these grants. We strongly urge you to begin collecting demographic data on your grant making as soon as practicable.

While there is no requirement under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that federal agencies collect data on the sex of grant applicants or grantees, there is also no prohibition on

collecting such data. The same GAO report found that the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture already collect the demographic data we seek. Therefore we do not believe there to be any significant legal, technical, or practical hurdles to your own agencies collecting these same data. However, GAO reported to us that, at least in some cases, your respective agency staff may believe there to be legal or other hurdles. If this is the case, please provide to us a detailed description of the nature of those hurdles, including specific references to the U.S. Code.

We respectfully request that each of you examine your internal policies around data collection for grant applications and grantees, and strongly urge you to include the collection of demographic data that would allow grant-making by your agency to be examined for gender equality. It is essential that the grant-making process allocating billions of taxpayer dollars each year be fair and equitable to all involved.

Thank you for your careful attention on this matter. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Cheri Hoffman, Legislative Director for Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter at (202) 225-3615 or Dahlia Sokolov, Democratic staff of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology at (202) 225-6375.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter

**Ranking Member** 

Committee on Rules

**Eddie Bernice Johnson** 

**Ranking Member** 

Space, Science and Technology Committee

Rosa DeLauro

Ranking Member

Labor, Health, Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee