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May 7, 2014

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

To: Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson

The National Science Foundation supplies significant resources for research, innovation, and education in the public interest. We write as a group of deans representing the social sciences, sciences, mathematics, and engineering at the University of California, Berkeley to oppose certain proposed elements of H.R. 4186, the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science and Technology Act of 2014 (*FIRST Act*), a bill to reauthorize programs of the National Science Foundation (NSF). In our view, the *FIRST Act* represents a disappointing departure from the principles established in the *America COMPETES Act*.

We urge Congress to take steps to ensure that NSF retains its ability to support the highest quality programs of research, innovation, and education. We highlight in particular two elements of the *FIRST Act* that we believe jeopardize that goal.

Funding for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate. Solutions to some of our most complex and pressing problems result from promoting high quality research and innovation across all science fields, and from enabling interdisciplinary partnerships among the physical and biological sciences, engineering, mathematics, and the social sciences. In areas ranging from natural hazards to the effective deployment of troops in unfamiliar cultures, the relatively modest investment in social science research has yielded valuable returns to society. We are deeply concerned that this bill would erode investment in social and behavioral sciences and education research supported within the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate. Further, it is our view that ambitious programs of research, innovation, and education would best be supported by a bill that authorizes a top-line appropriation without specifying authorizations and appropriations for individual directorates.

Processes and criteria for award of funds. The NSF is rightly lauded for its rigorous review of scientific merit in the award of funds. Legislative restrictions on the number of awards that can be made to principal investigators will undermine this merit review process and compromise the NSF's ability to use taxpayer dollars to the strongest possible social and economic benefit.

We wish to express our readiness to engage in any way that might prove fruitful in securing a solution to the problems we have identified. We endorse the sentiment expressed by Executive

Director Wendy Naus of the Consortium of Social Science Associations in her March 12 letter to the Honorable Larry Bucshon and the Honorable Daniel Lipinski:

We are confident that there is a solution that promotes all fields of science, reduces unnecessary burden for NSF staff and the research community, ensures transparency without duplication of effort, and allows NSF's merit review process—which is the envy of the world—to continue.

NSF funding yields enormous scientific, economic, educational, and social value to our nation in large part because of its comprehensive scope. NSF has for decades grasped the significance of social science research to advance other high level strategic initiatives in the sciences and engineering. We collectively support Congressional action that will sustain NSF's ability to support a robust agenda of high-quality social science research.

Sincerely,

Carla A. Hesse, Dean of Social Sciences
Stefano Bertozzi, Dean of the School of Public Health
Henry E. Brady, Dean of the Goldman School of Public Policy
Anthony J. Cascardi, Dean of Arts and Humanities
Jeffrey L. Edleson, Dean of the School of Social Welfare
J. Keith Gillless, Dean of the College of Natural Resources
Judith Warren Little, Dean of the Graduate School of Education
Gillian Lester, Acting Dean of Berkeley Law
Richard Lyons, Dean of the Haas School of Business
G. Steven Martin, Dean of Biological Sciences
Mark Richards, Dean of Mathematical and Physical Sciences
S. Shankar Sastry, Dean of the College of Engineering
AnnaLee Saxenian, Dean of the School of Information