

June 9, 2021

Eric S. Lander, PhD
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20504

Dear Dr. Lander,


On behalf of the Endocrine Society, I write to offer our congratulations on your appointment to lead the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). As you know, OSTP is critical in providing scientific and technological assistance to policymakers as they grapple with complex issues facing the nation. We are also very pleased that the administration has elevated the position of OSTP Director to the Cabinet, and we look forward to your contributions in this capacity to ensure the role of science in decision-making at the highest levels of government.

The Endocrine Society shares many mutual goals and priorities with you, and we would be happy to work with you to help advance important science and technology initiatives. Attached please find a summary of our policy priorities and positions that are relevant to the work of the OSTP.

Endocrine scientists and clinicians are at the core of solving some of the most pressing health problems of our time, from diabetes and obesity to infertility, bone health, thyroid conditions, and hormone-related cancers. These diseases affect growing numbers of people, placing stress on the health care system. Our more than 18,000 members include basic scientists who study fundamental hormone biology and pathways, clinical researchers who explore how those same pathways and systems are involved in human disease, and clinical practitioners who apply new scientific knowledge to deliver new therapies and improved care for patients. We promote policies that will increase the effectiveness of the biomedical research enterprise and ensure a sustainable pipeline of researchers so that the United States remains a world leader in scientific advances. We also support the important role of the scientific community in policymaking decisions that impact public health.

Given the extent of our common interest in many important science and technology initiatives, we would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and discuss these issues in more detail. I will ask the Endocrine Society's Director of Science Policy Joe Laakso, PhD (jlaakso@endocrine.org) to contact your staff to schedule.

Sincerely,



Carol H. Wysham, MD
President, Endocrine Society



Federal funding for biomedical research:

Endocrine scientists funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) continue to make remarkable contributions in areas of critical national interest, including diabetes, obesity, the microbiome, cancer, bone health, and fertility.

President Biden has prioritized federal funding for biomedical research in his fiscal year (FY) 2022 budget, with an increase of over \$2 billion to the base NIH budget in addition to the creation of a new \$6.5 billion Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). In this context, President Biden has also prioritized diabetes and cancer research. While these investments are welcome and needed, the success rate for research project grants remains extremely low with steady sustainable increases in funding needed to ensure that the pipeline of biomedical research talent remains strong into the future.

Future opportunities to cure many diseases will decrease if the government's investment in biomedical research declines. For FY 2022, we support a base NIH budget of at least at least \$46.1 billion, representing a \$3.2 billion increase over the FY 2021 enacted level. This number does not reflect adjustments to the NIH budget needed to support ARPA-H.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Research Workforce

Our community recognizes that women and underrepresented minority groups often face significant disadvantages in establishing and advancing their careers in the biomedical research workforce, with structural issues including sexism and racism contributing to a lack of diversity across the workforce and at all career stages. These issues have been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has further exacerbated existing disparities for researchers, especially those early in their career. The Endocrine Society is committed to fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion and we urge OSTP to advance initiatives to increase diversity in the biomedical research workforce along the entire pipeline to ensure that all students and trainees have viable paths to a career in science with mentors who can help guide them to achieve their goals.

Regulatory burdens in research:

Clinical and basic scientists receiving federal support are often negatively impacted by the time and effort required to comply with administrative requirements imposed by granting agencies and their home institutions. For example, grant forms are often not standardized across agencies, creating redundancies, and there can be multiple layers of administrative approval for forms, necessitating advanced due dates.

In addition to the burden on investigators, the excessive administrative burdens waste taxpayer dollars and delay the completion of lifesaving research. The high expense of these administrative and regulatory tasks also results in an increasingly unequal playing field for biomedical researchers at many institutions across the country. As the Administration examines opportunities to reduce federal regulations, we encourage you to consider opportunities to reduce onerous regulatory burdens faced by researchers.



Publishing and Peer Review

As a publisher of high-quality scientific journals, the Endocrine Society recognizes the important role that peer-review and editorial processes play in the curation and dissemination of reliable and reproducible scientific information. While we support increased access to scientific information, including open access publications such as the *Journal of the Endocrine Society* (JES), we are concerned about the potential impacts on scientific research and publication brought about by increasing adoption of broad open access requirements, such as Plan S, by research funding organizations. Researchers funded by Plan S would be unable to publish in most high-quality journals, without control over republication, commercial use, and derivative works by third parties. Other details of Plan S remain vague or unexplained in terms of operational application. For example, it remains uncertain how journals and authors will be able to adapt to a business model reliant on the “capped” article processing charges (APCs) that Plan S funders have undertaken to announce. We urge OSTP to maintain the existing 12 month embargo policy for NIH-funded research and to support the use of a CC-BY-NC-ND license to prevent modification and misuse of original scientific content where an open-access license is needed..

Standardization of Hormone Assays

The correct diagnosis and effective treatment and prevention of many diseases depend on accurate measurement of hormones. Many blood tests for hormones exist and assuring that all tests are sufficiently accurate and reliable is necessary for health care providers to make treatment decisions based on sound data. The Society is a founding member of the Partnership for the Accurate Testing of Hormones (PATH), which works with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Hormone Standardization Program to standardize hormone tests and to engage stakeholders to promote high quality hormone tests. We urge OSTP to support these activities.

Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals

The impact of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) on public health is a top research, clinical, and policy issue for the Society. Current testing guidelines and regulatory approaches are insufficient for identifying EDCs that cause harm; factors that should be considered in assessments of chemicals for hormone interference include: windows of sensitivity during human development (e.g., fetal development, puberty); vulnerable populations such as pregnant women and children; low-dose effects and non-monotonicity; and appropriate endpoints that predict harms for EDCs. We strongly encourage OSTP to promote the use of systematic review frameworks in chemical evaluations. We also encourage OSTP to include endocrine experts in discussions related to the evaluation of scientific data for endocrine effects, and we would be happy to identify appropriate experts.

Climate Science and Human Health

Our members are increasingly concerned about the long-term impacts of climate change on human health. A warming climate is predicted to have complex and significant impacts, including on the endocrine system. These changes are potentially further magnified by other environmental exposures, including to EDCs as described above. Of particular concern is the fact that the greatest combined impacts are likely to be felt by the most disadvantaged and marginalized communities. These issues require a firm commitment to scientific evidence and we would like to work with OSTP to support fact-based policies that can stand against disinformation and denial.