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**Timothy L. Killeen**  
*President*

March 11, 2022

Dear Illinois congressional delegation members:

I write to share the University of Illinois System's priorities as Congress resolves differences between S. 1260, the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA) and H.R. 4521, the America COMPETES Act (COMPETES).

We are pleased to see strong bipartisan support for boosting U.S. research and economic competitiveness, and we support many of the core goals of these bills. Those goals include significantly increasing authorized (and appropriated) funding levels for the National Science Foundation (NSF); establishing Department of Commerce-funded regional technology hubs; and appropriating funds for semiconductor R&D.

In addition to supporting the recommendations made by the [Association of Public and Land-grant Universities](#) and the [Association of American Universities](#), the University of Illinois System has three broad priorities for the conference report. The final bill should (1) increase support for NSF while preserving the agency's flexibilities and focus, which are crucial to its effectiveness; (2) expand the international talent pipeline that drives innovation and economic growth; (3) enhance research security without creating unnecessary bureaucracy or burdensome requirements.

Further details on these priorities can be found below:

### **Increasing Support for NSF**

- While we support the establishment of a new technology-focused directorate, it should not come at the expense of the fundamental research that lays the groundwork for translational work. Accordingly, Congress should include a full reauthorization for NSF that gives the agency maximum flexibility in launching and funding the new directorate.
- The Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) allows NSF to build research capacity across the country, while ensuring that the agency's funding decisions are based on sound science. Congress should ensure that NSF continues to have flexibility in administering EPSCoR, and that any expansions to this program do not come at the expense of other competitive funding that NSF awards.
- Congress should ensure that NSF has the resources to expand support for scientific infrastructure. For example, COMPETES includes a substantial increase in authorized funding for the Mid-Scale Research

Infrastructure Program, while Sec. 2108 of USICA authorizes the new directorate to make awards for test beds, including in cyberinfrastructure.

- We support the inclusion of COMPETES language on advanced computing infrastructure (Sec. 10307d), which includes an [amendment that](#) Rep. Bill Foster added during committee consideration to help ensure NSF adequately tracks and responds to the High Performance Computing (HPC) needs of its user community.

### **Expanding the International Talent Pipeline**

We urge Congress to include the following provisions from COMPETES, which will enhance the ability of the US to attract and retain the best and brightest from around the world:

- Sections 80301-80302, which create an immigrant startup W-visa category for entrepreneurs.
- Section 80303, which exempts STEM PhDs from annual green card limits. The provision also allows “dual intent” for STEM international students on F-visas, meaning these students would no longer have to prove that they will not seek permanent residence in the United States in order to obtain their student visa, or return home before pursuing a green card.
- Sec. 80401, which allows admission of a small number of essential international scientists and technical experts to promote and protect the national security innovation base.

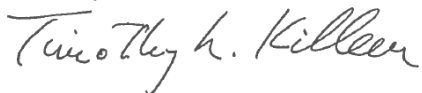
### **Enhancing Research Security**

Congress should ensure that legislative efforts to enhance research security both advance and are consistent with efforts already underway to implement National Security Presidential Memorandum 33 (NSPM-33) on United States Government-Supported Research and Development National Security Policy.

- We support Section 5212 of USICA, which confirms that foreign gifts to, or contracts with, an institution of higher education (IHE) do not require review by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), and oppose Section 3138, which mandates CFIUS review of certain gifts to and contracts with IHEs from foreign entities. COMPETES does not address CFIUS. CFIUS currently reviews foreign investments in the US; it is not intended, nor should it be asked, to review scientific partnerships.
- We oppose Sec. 6124(b) of USICA, which would require IHEs to maintain a searchable database of all foreign gifts to and contracts with faculty. Requiring reporting of even *de minimus* gifts would impose significant burdens on universities without a corresponding increase in actionable information. Moreover, under Sec. 117 of the Higher Education Act, IHEs already must report foreign gifts/contracts totaling \$250,000 annually. COMPETES and UISCA would lower that threshold to \$100,000 and \$50,000, respectively.

I thank you for your attention to these issues and would welcome the opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,



Timothy L. Killeen