

April 09, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Room H305, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH), we write today seeking your leadership during this 114th Congress to implement policies that balance the prudent use of taxpayer dollars without compromising the ability of our nation's scientist to participate in scientific conferences, share their findings and meet with current and potential collaborators from around the world.

ASTMH is the principal professional membership organization representing, educating, and supporting scientists, physicians, clinicians, researchers, epidemiologists, and other health professionals dedicated to the prevention and control of tropical diseases.

Specifically, ASTMH is concerned with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-12-12, and the restrictions these rules have placed on scientific research. This memorandum, *Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations*, consistent with Executive Order 13589, mandates a reduced level of agency travel through FY 2016. Although the Administration recently issued clarification to the memorandum allowing a bit more flexibility in travel approval, the procedures overall do not serve our nation's scientific enterprise and continue to prove burdensome to federal researchers.

ASTMH is deeply concerned that the interpretation and implementation of OMB's travel policy continues to have undue consequences on the ability of scientific personnel, particularly those

at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, to attend mission-critical professional meetings. Last fall, with Ebola in every headline, there were only a handful of CDC personnel attending the ASTMH Annual Meeting (November 2014). Approximately 4,500 tropical medicine researchers from around the world were in attendance and could have greatly benefited from hearing CDC's information live and in-person.

The policy also has a detrimental effect on scientists coming into the workforce. The inability of young scientists to interact with each other at these conferences combined with the stall in research funding is a bad combination that is pushing them away from the field in general and government service in particular.

Scientific conferences are often a catalyst for the development of the tools needed to address threats such as Ebola. These meetings serve our domestic and international interests and the core mission of the agency. With the health of Americans inextricably linked with global health, our core mission to seek treatments and prevention of tropical diseases and conditions in the developing world is aligned with our nation's best interests.

We are interested in working together in this new Congress to find smart solutions to ensure that tropical diseases and conditions in the developing world are aligned with our nation's best interests. Thank you for your consideration of this request. Our Executive Director, Karen Goraleski (kgoraleski@astmh.org or 847-753-5212) would be happy to offer any follow-up you request.

Respectfully,

Christopher W. Plowe, MD, MPH, FASTMH
President, ASTMH



Karen A. Goraleski
Executive Director, ASTMH

