



August 3, 2015

Senator Cory Gardner
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science
and Transportation
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Gary Peters
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science
and Transportation
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Submitted via email at SciencePolicy@commerce.senate.gov

Dear Senators Gardner and Peters:

On behalf of the Materials Research Society (MRS), a 16,000 member interdisciplinary society of scientists from academia, industry and government committed to advancing materials research to improve the quality of life, we are pleased to provide input regarding the America COMPETES Act, and your effort to gather input from the science and research community on federal research and development policy priorities. As a professional society whose membership relies on strong federal investment in both basic and advanced research funding, we are committed to a partnership to ensure that the COMPETES Act continues to serve the needs of the domestic research community.

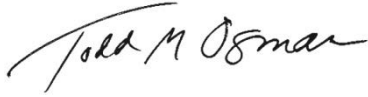
Overall, we believe that COMPETES, as currently constructed, provides a unique opportunity for Congress to drive federal investment in the workforce, knowledge base and technical infrastructure of the United States, especially through its oversight and establishment of policy priorities for the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy (DoE) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Through COMPETES, a national vision for scientific research and innovation that places the United States in a position of global leadership has been well-established, and MRS firmly believes that with moderate additional investment, this position can be maintained well into the future.

Your Committee is seeking public input on topics such as maximizing basic research, improving STEM education research and practices for students, and translating federal research results into innovative commercial applications. Sustained and robust investment in basic scientific research, a measured increase in authorization levels for the major funding agencies covered under the law, and the utilization of programs designed to support diversity in STEM education for both youth and graduate students will help our nation to continue to be a global innovation leader.

Other recent legislative efforts to reauthorize COMPETES have outlined low authorization levels for several federal agencies, including the various NSF directorates and for DoE (especially EERE and ARPA-E). These declines in funding levels are in stark contrast to the increased investment other countries worldwide are making in science and technology. The original purpose of the COMPETES legislation, authored after the groundbreaking report *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, was a strong marker in making sound investments in US R&D. While we recognize that the nation is faced with certain fiscal constraints, without multi-year sustained investments needed for our national innovation infrastructure, there will be a deleterious impact on the scientific community and our country's economy

We recognize that COMPETES is still making its way through the legislative process, and the Committee continues its work on this project. MRS is dedicated to working with the Committee to ensure the strongest bill possible, and if you have any suggestions as to how we can continue to be a partner in this process, including participating in future roundtables, please let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd M. Osman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Todd Osman
Executive Director