

AAU Association of American Universities
APLU Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
COGR Council on Governmental Relations

April 24, 2012

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa
Chairman, House Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
Ranking Member, House Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Cummings:

On behalf of the leading U.S. research universities that our associations represent, we write about H.R. 2146, the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act) of 2011, which is scheduled to come to the House floor under suspension of the rules this week. We strongly believe that financial transparency of federal award funds is essential to ensuring public trust. Universities take very seriously their obligation to be responsible stewards of federal funds, and we support the aim of the legislation to make financial information more transparent so that the federal government and the public have sufficient information to ensure that taxpayer monies are spent for their intended purposes.

We appreciate the fact that the version of the DATA Act to be considered by the House, which is an amendment in the nature of a substitute, addresses some of the serious concerns we have raised about the bill. Those concerns have centered on the imposition of redundant and costly reporting requirements. The revised bill would eliminate explicitly duplicative reporting within three years. We believe this modified language is a positive step towards reducing unnecessary reporting burdens on grantees and one that comports with the intended spirit of the legislation.

There are some significant other concerns that the revised version of the DATA Act does not yet address. However, we are hopeful that we will be able to continue to work with you and your staff as the bill progresses to achieve our common goals of further streamlining reporting systems and reducing bureaucratic waste. Specifically, we believe that the legislation should prevent federal agencies from perpetuating existing, and creating new, financial reporting requirements on top of those required by the Commission. The ideal federal financial reporting system should have only common data elements that work for all federal agencies, and we want to work with you to make this a reality.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with you toward solutions that would create a federal financial reporting system that is transparent, streamlined, and non-duplicative of existing requirements.

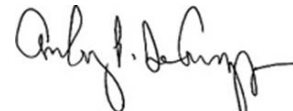
Sincerely,



Hunter R. Rawlings III
President
AAU



Peter McPherson
President
APLU



Anthony DeCrappeo
President
COGR