

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

May 21, 2013

The Honorable Darrell Issa
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
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 to express our support for the goals of H.R. 2061, the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA). 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 about federal grants and contracts more transparent so that the federal government and the public have sufficient information to ensure that taxpayer monies are spent for their intended purposes.

H.R. 2061 takes a more direct approach than the bill (H.R. 2146) passed in the 112th Congress for improving the transparency of the financial information that federal grant and contract recipients report to the federal government. The revised legislation includes several provisions to help improve accountability and streamline reporting for the expenditure of federal grant and contract funds. First, it enhances the USASpending.gov website portal, which is a central database for making transparent financial information about all federal grants and contracts. Second, it tasks the Treasury Department to establish government-wide financial data standards. Third, it requires the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to review current federal financial reporting requirements of awardees and to reduce duplicative reporting and compliance costs. We appreciate that universities are specifically mentioned as a stakeholder with whom OMB should seek input as it pursues streamlined reporting requirements. Fourth, it establishes a pilot program to evaluate consolidated reporting by federal grant and contract recipients. We hope that this pilot program will achieve its purposes to improve accuracy of financial data while at the same time simplify reporting requirements through consolidation and automation. We support these important provisions.

We have appreciated the opportunity to work with you during the past two years on the DATA legislation. We commend you for the improvements made to the legislation, which we now support. We look forward to continuing to work with you as the bill advances in the 113th Congress.

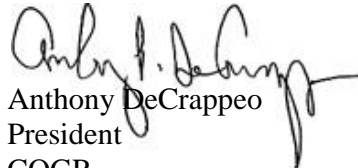
Sincerely,



Hunter R. Rawlings III
President
AAU



Peter McPherson
President
APLU



Anthony DeCrappeo
President
COGR