

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

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December 5, 2012

The Honorable Mark Warner  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Warner and Portman:

On behalf of the leading U.S. research universities that our associations represent, we write to express our support for the goals of S. 3600, 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 more transparent so that the federal government and the public have sufficient information to ensure that taxpayer monies are spent for their intended purposes.

S. 3600 takes a more streamlined approach than the original bill (S. 1222) for improving the transparency of the financial information that federal grant and contract recipients report to the federal government. S. 1222 would have imposed significant new compliance costs on universities that would have taken time and resources away from scientific research and education activities. The original bill also did not go far enough to reduce duplicative and unnecessary financial reporting requirements already imposed on federal awardees.

Your new bill, S. 3600, focuses on improving data standards and reporting, as well as streamlining financial reporting. We welcome and appreciate this approach and resulting improvement to the legislation.

The legislation wisely includes several provisions to help improve accountability for the expenditure of federal grant and contract funds. First, it would enhance the USASpending.gov website portal, which is a central database for making transparent financial information about all federal grants and contracts. Second, it requires the Treasury Department to establish government-wide financial data standards. Additionally, it requires the federal government to make more transparent the financial data it *already* collects from federal awardees. The bill also requires 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. We strongly endorse these important provisions.

Overall, we believe that S. 3600 is sound legislation. We commend you for the improvements made to the original bill and we support consideration of these legislation by the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. We look forward to working with you through the legislative process.

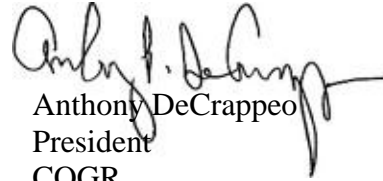
Sincerely,



Hunter R. Rawlings III  
President  
AAU



Peter McPherson  
President  
APLU



Anthony DeCrappeo  
President  
COGR

cc: Senator Joseph Lieberman, Chairman  
Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee  
Senator Susan Collins, Ranking Member  
Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee