

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

May 29, 2013

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. 994, 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.

We appreciate the approach that S. 994 takes for improving the transparency of the financial information that federal grant and contract recipients report to the federal government. Your legislation includes several provisions to help improve accountability and streamline reporting for the expenditure of federal grant and contract funds.

First, the bill 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 original bill and we support S. 994 and its consideration by the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. We look forward to continuing to work with you as the bill advances in the 113th Congress.

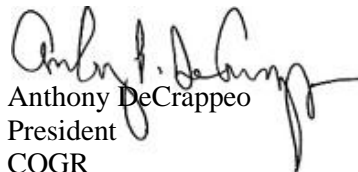
Sincerely,



Hunter R. Rawlings III
President
AAU



Peter McPherson
President
APLU



Anthony DeCrappeo
President
COGR

cc: Senator Thomas R. Carper, Chairman
Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee
Senator Tom Coburn, Ranking Member
Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee