



BIODIVERSITY COLLECTIONS NETWORK

June 22, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 2051

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

The Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN) is a national initiative led by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance), and Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC). On behalf of the community that BCoN represents, we would like to express our strong appreciation for Congress' bipartisan work on the United States Innovation and Competition Act ([S. 1260](#)) and the America COMPETES Act of 2022 ([H.R. 4521](#)). We are writing today to respectfully urge you to ensure that the final conferenced bill includes robust sustainable growth in authorized funding for both existing programs as well as the new technology directorate at the National Science Foundation (NSF). We also encourage you to include the collections-related provisions in Division B, Title III of the America COMPETES Act—first introduced as the National Science Foundation for the Future Act ([H.R. 2225](#))—in the conferenced legislation.

Through the membership of its founding organizations, BCoN represents the diversity of biological science societies, natural history museums and herbaria, living collections, and other research centers and organizations. We represent the scientists, administrators, curators, collection managers, and other professionals who work in or use scientific collections and their associated data in research and education. Our member institutions and their expert staff build, maintain, study, and make accessible the vast biological collections that provide critical specimens and data for documenting, monitoring, and preserving biodiversity now and into the future.

Scientific collections, and the collections professionals and scientists who make, care for, and study these resources, are a vital component of our nation's research infrastructure. These collections and their associated experts contribute to the expansion of our bioeconomy. Whether held at a museum, government managed laboratory or archive, or in a university science department, these scientific resources form a coordinated network of specimens, samples, and data (for example, genetic, tissue, organism, and environmental) that are a unique and irreplaceable foundation from which scientists are studying and explaining past and present life on earth.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is the backbone of the U.S. scientific enterprise and is the only federal agency that funds basic research in all non-medical fields of science and engineering. The NSF supports research that leverages existing collections as well as studies that gather new natural history specimens. The NSF also plays a unique role in protecting and expanding access to our nation's scientific collections.

The NSF's Directorates for Biological Sciences (BIO), Geosciences (GEO), and Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) support research and student training opportunities in natural history collections. The NSF is an important supporter of national biological research infrastructure that houses natural history collections, such as living stock collections and field stations. The NSF also funds evolving work to digitize high priority specimen collections. The result of this effort is that irreplaceable biological specimens and their associated data are now accessible through the Internet to researchers, educators, and the public. In addition to supporting research, the NSF's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education programs enhance the ability of museums, botanic gardens, zoos, and other research institutions to provide science learning opportunities for students.

If enacted, the provisions outlined in H.R. 2225, would make vital investments in the NSF's current scientific capacity while also expanding the agency's potential to address emerging challenges. NSC Alliance, SPNHC, and AIBS were pleased to endorse this legislation, which articulates a strong commitment to our nation's scientific and technological enterprise.

We applaud the emphasis placed on the importance of sustained support for biological research collections in H.R. 2225. Key collections-related provisions in this bill are supported by recent reports from the [National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine](#) and the [Biodiversity Collections Network](#). These reports highlight the value of mobilizing biodiversity collections and data in spurring new scientific discoveries that grow our economy, improve our public health and wellbeing, and increase our national security by informing and guiding decision making that lead to sustainable national and global management of natural resources and human prosperity. Both reports articulate a common vision of the future of biological collections and define a need to broaden and deepen the collections and associated data to realize the potential for biodiversity collections to inform 21st century science and conservation. This endeavor requires robust investments in our nation's scientific collections, whether they are owned by a federal or state agency or are part of an educational institution or free-standing natural history museum or another research center. The investments proposed in H.R. 2225

would be critical in the efforts to mobilize biodiversity specimens and data in spurring new scientific discoveries and addressing the grand challenges of our day—climate change, spread of disease, invasive species, human health, and global biodiversity loss.

We are encouraged by Congress' bipartisan commitment to sustaining U.S. competitiveness through much needed investments in our nation's scientific enterprise, and hope to see support for biological collections in the final bill. Please do not hesitate to contact Jyotsna Pandey (jpandey@aibs.org) if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,



Scott Glisson
CEO
American Institute of
Biological Sciences



Gil Nelson, Ph.D.
President
Natural Science
Collections Alliance



Julian Carter
President
Society for the
Preservation of Natural
History Collection

Cc: Members of the USICA—COMPETES Conference Committee