September 8, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid  The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader   Republican Leader
United States Senate    United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510   Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Republican Leader McConnell:

We, the undersigned organizations, representing health care providers, public health leaders, biomedical researchers, and the patients that benefit from their work, urge you to oppose S. 1347, the “Conference Accountability Act of 2014,” which was reported out of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on July 30, 2014. We also strongly urge you to resist placing it on the Senate calendar for floor consideration.

This legislation would place harmful restrictions on medical and scientific meetings that would threaten scientific progress and increase federal expenditures on unnecessary administrative and reporting requirements. Federal support for, and participation in, scientific meetings has dramatically decreased over the last several years due to federal budget constraints and other policies enacted by the White House Office of Management and Budget. The proposed additional restrictions would further handicap research, implementation and collaborative efforts necessary to address serious public health threats and advance discovery of life saving treatments and diagnostics. National and international meetings play a critical role in the scientific process and in the implementation of scientific advances by allowing for analytical discussion and interaction between government experts and other physicians and scientists in addition to supporting the education and mentoring of junior researchers and physicians—which is severely limited by video conferences and other virtual meeting alternatives.

Furthermore, the prohibitions and requirements proposed in S. 1347 threaten our nation’s leadership and investment in science and research globally. We have witnessed the evolution of medical and scientific innovation globally through the information sharing, mentoring, and professional collaboration that occurs between U.S. scientists and their colleagues from around the world at these meetings.

We share the goal of promoting accountability and transparency in government spending and stand ready to assist in this effort without diminishing the federal investment in medical research and our ability to effectively facilitate and share new knowledge leading to lifesaving vaccines, diagnostics and treatments—the ultimate goals of our investments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
AcademyHealth
AIDS Policy Project

Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of HIV Medicine
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Brain Coalition
American College of Prosthodontists
American Epilepsy Society
American Heart Association
American Physiological Society
American Psychological Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
American Statistical Association
American Thoracic Society
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Molecular Pathology
Association of American Geographers
Association of Independent Research Institutes
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
AVAC: Global Advocacy for HIV Prevention
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)
CurePSP - Foundation for PSP | CBD & Related Brain Diseases
Foundation for Integrative AIDS Research (FIAR)
Friends of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (FNIH)
Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research
Genetics Society of America
Health GAP (Global Access Project)
HIV Medicine Association
Housing Works, Inc.
IDSA Center for Global Health Policy
Infectious Diseases Society of America
International Essential Tremor Foundation
M-CM Network
MdDS Balance Disorder Foundation
NAPHSIS-National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
North American Neuro-Ophthalmology Society
Research!America
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
Society for Women's Health Research
The American Society for Cell Biology
The Coalition for the Life Sciences
The Optical Society
The Sturge-Weber Foundation
Treatment Action Group