

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 14, 2015

The Honorable Sylvia Burwell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

Today, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released their report, *"Women in STEM Research: Better Data and Information Sharing Could Improve Oversight of Federal Grant-making and Title IX Compliance."* Out of concern for the advancement and fair treatment of women in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields in the federal government, we requested that the GAO examine federal agencies' efforts to address gender discrimination in the (STEM) fields.

One troubling finding of the GAO report is that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) does not conduct Title IX reviews of National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant-receiving institutions. Title IX reviews of federally-funded grant programs at educational institutions are required by law under the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

It has been 43 years since the passage of Title IX granting women equal treatment in educational institutions receiving federal funds. Compliance reviews ensure that institutions receiving federal funding do not discriminate on the basis of gender. Given that HHS has the responsibility to perform Title IX reviews for the NIH, the largest federal science grant-making agency in the United States, it is distressing that HHS has been negligent in doing so. We call on you today to abide by the law and immediately begin conducting regular Title IX reviews on institutions receiving NIH grants.

We applaud the leadership that NIH has shown in other areas to plan and implement policies to level the playing field for women. We are pleased by the work that NIH has accomplished within the Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers, and we are optimistic about the creation of the NIH Reentry into Biomedical Research Careers program, which helps scientists transition back to their careers after taking family leave.

The GAO found no meaningful difference in the success rates for women and men applying to NIH grants, which is a positive finding. However, women continue to lag behind their male peers in academic and professional

advancement in the STEM fields and will not reach equality unless we remain vigilant to the effort. It is essential that the grant-making process allocating billions of taxpayer dollars each year be fair and equitable as well as within the law. Conducting regular Title IX reviews is an essential step in this ongoing process.

Thank you for your time and careful attention to this important matter. If you have any questions please contact us through Jennifer Brookes on Rep. Louise Slaughter's staff at [jennifer.brookes@mail.house.gov](mailto:jennifer.brookes@mail.house.gov) or (202) 225-3615.

Sincerely,



Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro  
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