

April 29, 2022

The Honorable John Cornyn  
United States Senate  
517 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn:

We are writing on behalf of the undersigned Texas institutions and libraries to urge you to protect the provision ensuring that taxpayers are guaranteed timely, free access to the results of publicly funded research during conference negotiations with the House regarding the U.S. Innovation & Competition Act (USICA) and the America COMPETES Act. We very much appreciate your previous work on the [Fair Access to Science & Technology Research Act](#) (FASTR) during negotiations in the Senate Homeland Security & Government Affairs Committee (HSGAC) in the 114th Congress. Section 2527 of USICA mirrors the FASTR language you championed in HSGAC and we urge you to support it again. The language would codify the current policy established by the 2013 [White House Memorandum on Increasing Public Access to Federally Funded Scientific Research](#) by “directing federal agencies funding more than \$100 million annually in research and development expenditures to provide for free online public access to federally-funded research no later than 12 months after publication in peer-reviewed journals, preferably sooner.” It is imperative that this language is maintained in order to ensure that the public has access to the most timely and cutting-edge information resulting from federally-funded research.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated just how hard it is for researchers, physicians, and public health experts to use research behind a paywall. At the start of the pandemic, one of the first actions policymakers (including the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy) took was to ask publishers to make all coronavirus-related journal articles openly available in order to accelerate our understanding of the virus. The resulting [database of open access articles](#) has been a tremendous asset to researchers, and has been accessed more than 275 *million times* since its launch. The demand—and value—for these articles to the research community and the public is clear. We should ensure that all U.S. taxpayer-funded research on diseases and other pressing issues such as drought resilience are readily available.

Despite the success of the open access database for COVID-related research, the majority of taxpayer-funded research outputs are still locked behind publisher paywalls or inaccessible in proprietary databases, stifling the broad dissemination of knowledge and our ability to innovate for the public good. The language on open access in Section 2527 of S. 1260 is a crucial step towards making taxpayer-funded research readily available and fully usable by scientists and the public alike.

Thank you again for your work on this important issue. We urge you to protect Section 2527 of USICA to accomplish the goals you set out in the FASTR Act.

Sincerely,

Austin Community College

Rice University

Texas State University

Texas Tech University Libraries

Trinity University

UH Libraries, University of Houston

University of North Texas

University of Texas at Austin

University of Texas at Arlington Libraries

University of Texas at San Antonio

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine Library