June 4, 2019

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 2010

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of the American Society for Cell Biology, a professional society of nearly 8,000 basic biomedical researchers in all 50 states and 65 nations around the world, I am writing to lend our strong support for the Keep STEM Talent Act of 2019.

The Keep STEM Talent Act of 2019 will play an important role in making sure America retains its position as the world leader in science. All too often, international students, trained at U.S. institutions, often at federal government expense, return to their home countries to, essentially, compete with the scientific community that trained them. Instead, we should be encouraging these young scientists to remain in the United States and join the American scientific workforce. Your bill significantly resolves this problem by providing permanent resident status to international students who have completed advanced STEM degrees from U.S. educational institutions and are interested in continuing their research in the U.S. biotechnology industry.

As the quality of science increases in other countries, collaborations between U.S. scientists and researchers in other countries grow. Between 2003 and 2016, the number of scientific papers with American and international co-authors has doubled. American-authored papers with German and with French collaborators have each doubled. Research papers by American scientists with co-authors from India have tripled and papers with Chinese co-authors have increased 8 times. Even co-authorships between American and Saudi Arabian scientists have increased 16 times between 2003 and 2016.

In the scientific community, collaborations are an essential part of research. The increasing number of international co-authors of American scientific papers is also an indication of the growing quality of international scientific research communities. These statistics also show that America’s role as the world leader in science is no longer as guaranteed as it once was. The United States
is going to have to work to maintain that leadership position.

In 2017, the ASCB published a white paper, “ASCB Calls to Modernize the U.S. Immigration System for Science.” One of the recommendations of the white paper was that “those international students who receive a doctorate in a scientific discipline, including biomedical research, from a U.S. teaching institution should have the option of remaining in the U.S. with a green card.” The Keep STEM Talent Act of 2019 will meet the ASCB recommendation and also help the United States maintain its leadership position.

Sincerely,

Andrew Murray, PhD
ASCB President

Erika Shugart, PhD
Chief Executive Officer