September 1, 2020

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
2321 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Johnson:

At this time of great challenges for our nation, we write to thank you for your leadership in confronting inequities in the U.S. scientific enterprise that have prevented full participation of racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in STEM. We therefore support your call for the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) to undertake a study to acknowledge and assess this structural problem, namely systemic racism in academia.

As we have seen in stark terms over the last six months, while the novel coronavirus is a threat to everyone living in the U.S., the burden has not been equally felt. There are disproportionately higher rates of illness and death in communities of color in the U.S. The reasons for this are many, but it illustrates with new urgency the need to foster a diverse and inclusive scientific workforce to tackle these and other challenges from a wider range of perspectives.

While efforts to increase diversity in the scientific workforce may have produced incremental change, we have yet to see large-scale results. Across disciplines, demographic representation throughout the ranks of academia still fails to reflect the diversity of our society. We are hopeful that a comprehensive study by the NASEM will yield the data and tools that the academic community needs to pursue evidence-based changes leading to more rapid progress.

A scientific enterprise that reflects the diversity of our nation will be more innovative and better equipped to address the challenges before us. Collectively, our organizations are working to change culture and improve diversity, equity and inclusion efforts within our staff, our members and our disciplines. The scientific community stands ready to work with you and your committee as you endeavor to address the systemic racism that exists within academia.

Sincerely,

Acoustical Society of America  
Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation  
American Anthropological Association
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Scientific Society Presidents
Council on Undergraduate Research
Crop Science Society of America
Ecological Society of America
Endocrine Society
Entomological Society of America
Federation of American Scientists
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences
Genetics Society of America
Geological Society of America
Harvard University
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society
Mathematical Association of America
National Communication Association
National Council for Science and the Environment
National Institute of Building Sciences
OSA-The Optical Society
Research!America
SACNAS
SAGE Publishing
San Jose State University
Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honor Society
Society for Freshwater Science
Society for Personality Assessment
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
Society of Toxicology
Soil Science Society of America
The Gerontological Society of America
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine