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2025 M Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036

phone: (202) 367-1189
fax: (202) 367-2269
www.bhef.com

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July 8, 2010

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Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
Russell 254
Washington, DC 20510

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The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
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Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
Dirksen 560
Washington, DC 20510

Molly Corbett Broad
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Wesley G. Bush
CEO & President,
Northrop Grumman Corporation

Dear Chairman Rockefeller and Senator Hutchison:

Winston J. Churchill
General Partner,
SCP Private Equity Management, L.P.

On behalf of the members of the Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF), a coalition of corporate, academic, and foundation chief executives who provide leadership to improve U.S. education and competitiveness, I urge you to act to ensure swift and bipartisan passage of legislation to reauthorize the America COMPETES Act.

Walt Havenstein
CEO,
SAIC

David A. Jones, Jr.
Chairman,
Humana, Inc

BHEF strongly supported the landmark legislation passed by Congress and then signed by President Bush in 2007 as a means to ensure not only that the nation would continue to be the world's leader in research and innovation, but that it also would produce the next generation of scientists and engineers capable of driving innovation. Through the COMPETES Act, a number of key programs were authorized to strengthen education in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), including support for teachers and students.

Michael King
Vice President,
Global Education Industry IBM

David Maxwell
President,
Drake University

However, since the passage of COMPETES in 2007, the U.S. has lost vital ground in both areas. Looking ahead, we are particularly concerned about the future of our STEM workforce. As the number of STEM workers eligible to retire has increased dramatically, the number of students pursuing and earning degrees in STEM majors and choosing careers in these fields has been stagnating.

Charles B. Reed
Chancellor,
The California State University

Edward B. Rust, Jr.
Chairman & CEO,
State Farm Insurance Companies
BHEF Past Chair

As your committee takes up reauthorization, we would encourage you to keep the research budgets of the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy, and National Institute of Standards and Technology on track for doubling. We also would encourage you to strengthen provisions to support students in K-12 education and throughout the entire education pipeline, including higher education. This is critical because, as the National Science Board's Science and Engineering Indicators 2010 document states, while the number of STEM bachelor's degrees awarded increased by 5.4 percent over the most recent five-year period, overall degree production rose by more than 13 percent during the same time. Consequently, we would encourage support for programs designed to increase the numbers of students who earn STEM degrees and choose STEM careers, and encourage stronger collaborations between business/industry and higher education. These provisions would encourage a systemic approach that leverages private and public resources to bolster STEM education, and ultimately ensure a highly skilled STEM workforce.

Richard Stephens
Senior Vice President,
Human Resources & Administration
The Boeing Company

Lee T. Todd
President,
University of Kentucky

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Washington University in St. Louis
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TCAA-CREF

Senator John D. Rockefeller IV
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
July 9, 2010
Page 2 of 2

We strongly encourage the committee to move forward with the America COMPETES Act reauthorization and welcome the opportunity to work with you to accomplish this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Fitzgerald". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Fitzgerald" clearly distinguishable.

Brian K. Fitzgerald, Ed.D.
Executive Director