



January 30, 2012

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa, Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Issa and Cummings:

We are writing on behalf of the Medical Library Association (MLA) and Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) to express our opposition to H.R. 3699, "The Research Works Act." MLA and AAHSL work to promote access to quality health information for the health care community and the public. We maintain that government-generated information, including online access to articles that report the results of federally funded research, is a public good and must be disseminated with as few barriers as possible. This act would restrict access to information generated through public funds, overturn the successful NIH public access policy, and prohibit other federal agencies from establishing similar policies.

Our organizations played a strong leadership role in supporting the development of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) public access policy, and we affirm our support of expansion of public access policies across the Federal government. The NIH public access policy benefits America's citizens by providing timely access to relevant scientific information, informing clinical care, stimulating discovery, and improving health literacy. MLA and AAHSL have observed firsthand the significant benefit of providing public access to publications arising from NIH funded research including its positive benefit-cost ratio, return on investment, and efficacy and efficiency to fuel new research, discoveries, and therapies.

Further, MLA and AAHSL believe that the NIH public access policy has demonstrated that having timely access to the results of federally funded research enables researchers to realize new discoveries more quickly, encourages a more open exchange of information within the research community, strengthens the bench-to-bedside approach of translational research, and enhances the affordability and distribution of scientific and scholarly research. Since establishment of the NIH public access policy, health care professionals who practice evidence-based medicine (EBM) can more easily apply the best available evidence to patient care because the scientific research is freely available online.

As organizations whose members constitute a large percentage of the subscribers to medical journals, we can attest that the availability of NIH-funded research articles in PubMed Central does not lead libraries to cancel journal subscriptions. It does improve the ability of medical and health sciences libraries to provide high quality, relevant, timely, and accurate information to all those who need it.

MLA and AAHSL also believe that providing for the long-term stewardship of published research results is imperative for ensuring integrity and access to scientific literature. Under the NIH policy, PubMed Central serves as the digital archive of the National Library of Medicine (NLM), providing a permanent archive for the results of

research funded by the National Institutes of Health thereby ensuring its preservation and availability for generations to come. NLM has the expertise and experience to manage this important digital archive function.

MLA and AAHSL strongly oppose H.R. 3699 and urge you to consider the damaging impact this bill would have on the health and well-being of our nation's citizens and the vitality of the research community. We also encourage you to take into account the benefits of the NIH public access policy and the establishment of similar policies across other federal agencies, and to support an approach that balances the interests of all constituencies including the public and private sectors.

Sincerely,

Digitally signed by Gerald Perry, DN: cn=Gerald Perry, email=gperry@mla-net.org, c=US



Gerald Perry, AHIP, President
Medical Library Association



Gary Freiburger, AHIP, President
Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries

Organizational Biographies

The Medical Library Association (MLA) (<http://www.mlanet.org>) is a nonprofit educational organization with 4,000 health sciences information professional individual and institutional members worldwide. Founded in 1898, MLA provides lifelong educational opportunities, supports a knowledgebase of health information research, and works with a global network of partners to promote the importance of quality information for improved health to the health care community and the public.

The Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) (<http://www.aahsl.org>) is composed of the libraries of 124 accredited U.S. and Canadian schools as well as 26 associate members. AAHSL supports academic health sciences libraries and directors in advancing the patient care, research, education and community service missions of academic health centers through visionary executive leadership and expertise in health information, scholarly communication, and knowledge management.