

February 8, 2012

House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Issa and Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform,

On behalf of the undersigned public health, research, and academic groups, we write to express our strong opposition to H.R. 3699, the "Research Works Act," introduced on December 16, 2011 and referred to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

This bill would prohibit US federal agencies from conditioning their grant funding to require that all members of the public be guaranteed online access to the products of government-funded research. This prohibition will significantly inhibit the ability to advance scientific discoveries and stimulate innovation in all scientific disciplines. The bill will prevent public health groups, patients, researchers, and physicians from accessing the results of crucial biomedical research and results. It will also impact knowledge, information and dissemination and sharing of critical advancements in life-saving research and scientific discovery.

We are especially concerned that H.R. 3699 would negatively affect the current successful National Institutes of Health (NIH) Public Access Policy, which provides for public access within one year of publication of the original article. We are strongly supportive of the NIH Public Access Policy, which has resulted in millions gaining access to vital health care information from the NIH's PubMed Central database. Today, under the current policy, more than 90,000 new biomedical manuscripts each year are made available to the public. Our groups, as well as patients, families, physicians, and scientists, access and use this critical health-related information in a variety of ways, including to make better informed decisions, to improve health policies and outcomes, and to promote further innovation and research.

H.R. 3699 would prohibit the deposit of these manuscripts to the public and prevent use and access of the results of biomedical research produced by the NIH as well as research coming from all other US federal agencies. Furthermore, it would prevent access to critical scientific information on hundreds of other areas that directly impact public health. In hindering access to these manuscripts, H.R. 3699 would deny taxpayers access to the results of the very research they have funded.

For public health, research, and academic groups as well as the populations we serve, it is important that the NIH and other agencies continue to provide timely, public access to the results of federally funded research. We therefore have to oppose H.R. 3699 and ask you to do the same.

Sincerely,

American Medical Students Association (AMSA)
Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi)
Health Action International (HAI)
Knowledge Ecology International (KEI)
Médecins sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF)
Public Citizen (PC)
Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM)