September 20, 2013

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Science, Space and Technology
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith:

I write on behalf of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) to thank you for your recent statement supporting social science research at the National Science Foundation (NSF). In your opening statement at the Committee on Science Space and Technology, Subcommittee on Research and Technology’s recent hearing on methamphetamine addiction, you noted that the NSF “…will play an integral role towards a more complete understanding of this problem. Hypothesis-based data-driven social science research can be used to understand the behavior science behind addiction.”

The AAA, too, is a strong supporter of the NSF and we are proud to consider ourselves partners in advocating for this priority federal program. It is a widely-recognized fact that many of our nations’ innovations in science and technology owe their beginnings to NSF, where financial support for basic research has been wildly successful. Indeed, many private sector companies, unable to support basic research, rely on NSF to fund research that, many times result in new discoveries. We believe that a strong federal investment in NSF provides future benefits that far outweigh dollars expended.

NSF plays a unique and critical role in advancing basic scientific research, nurturing future scientists, cultivating collaboration around the world, and enhancing scientific knowledge and skills for students of all ages and the public. NSF provides a model for fostering scientific creativity and discovery, and the products of that creativity and discovery have contributed to the international leadership of the United States in scientific and engineering research and education. Even in times of fiscal crisis and budgetary constraints, the United States needs to invest strongly in science and technology to maintain our competitive edge internationally.

Basic research in the social sciences is key to our understanding of individuals and society. Through generous funding from the NSF, anthropology has enhanced scholarly knowledge in the areas of cultural resource protection, environmental sustainability, preservation of languages, child health and development and access to quality healthcare.

We again thank you for your recognition of the problems of methamphetamine addiction, and agree that progress on this problem, like many others, requires an interdisciplinary approach that includes the contribution of social science research.
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about this letter, please contact AAA Director of Public Affairs, Damon Dozier, at (703) 528-1902 or ddozier@aaanet.org.

Sincerely,

Dr. Edward Liebow
Executive Director
American Anthropological Association