

24 March 2010

The Honorable Daniel Lipinski
1717 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to add my support to the letter dated March 15, 2010, from William Y. Brown, President of the Natural Science Collections Alliance, requesting that your Subcommittee include natural science collections in the reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act.

The nation faces unprecedented environmental challenges in kind and scale. Climate change, human impacts on natural ecosystems, introductions of non-native species, and local losses of species all influence the state of biological diversity and the certainty of essential ecological services. In each case, our ability to detect, monitor, and respond to such fluctuations in biodiversity depends upon reliable knowledge about what species exist and where. That information, in turn, depends upon adequately curated collections and vibrant collections-based research.

The United States is a world leader in biodiversity research and possesses perhaps half of an estimated three billion specimens worldwide. These collections represent the single most important research resource to explore, understand, and inform public policy about biodiversity conservation. Put bluntly, we cannot conserve that which we do not know to exist. Expanded support for and research on our nation's natural history collections is the most cost effective investment we can make toward building the scientific knowledge we need to meet the environmental challenges ahead. Including natural science collections in the America COMPETES Act would be a very positive next step toward this end.

Sincerely,



Quentin D. Wheeler
University Vice President
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences