

December 23, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the Endocrine Society, a medical and scientific specialty society comprising nearly 18,000 scientists and clinicians around the world, I am writing to you to express our serious concern regarding a potential administration policy that has recently come to our attention. We have learned that the administration is proposing to fundamentally alter the publishing marketplace by developing a policy that would mandate immediate and free distribution of journal articles financed by the federal government and published by organizations, including non-profit scientific societies such as the Endocrine Society. This proposal significantly threatens the scientific rigor and high quality of research that has distinguished our journals and advanced the field of endocrinology.

I want to emphasize that our members are committed to the dissemination of scientific information. We support public access to practice-changing research discoveries that improve health. For example, we make clinical practice guidelines freely available immediately. If patients request access to breakthrough studies related to their endocrine disease, we also provide this resource to them immediately. While we support increased access to scientific information, including open access publications such as the Journal of the Endocrine Society (JES), we and others rely on multiple publishing models to enable the distribution of high-quality scientific research.

The current 12-month embargo period, after which all articles are made freely available, works well for all concerned: it allows for the timely distribution of the Society's journals, online and in print, for researchers, medical professionals, and patients to read the articles not only in the U.S., but also in 171 other countries, including approximately 8,000 non-profit research and medical institutions worldwide. It also allows the Endocrine Society to financially support the continuation of its journal operations, including providing expert peer review that ensures the quality, integrity, and medical safety of the published articles.

Reducing or eliminating the length of the embargo would make it difficult for us to maintain our strong peer review system and our ability to ensure research integrity. Further, an immediate zero-embargo mandate would undercut our ability to bring in revenues from the subscriptions, rights, and licensing of those articles that cover the costs of producing the journals and supporting the Society's non-profit programs. Contrary to arguments stating a zero-embargo would increase access to more science, our journals would be able to continue to publish only by reducing their size, robustness, and frequency in keeping with the fewer dollars paying for the cost of their operations. Consequently, fewer articles would be available to advance endocrinology and support patients. Moreover, a shift towards a universal open access model would require



years for professional scientific societies like ours to implement, and many journals would cease to be viable and exist, further reducing the ability of scientists to disseminate rigorously peer reviewed research findings.

For researchers, the additional costs of peer-review and other features of journal publishing via open-access journals would be significant. This would ultimately impact how grant funds are spent, with fewer dollars going to the actual costs of doing the research. Therefore, loss of the embargo period would place increased financial burdens on taxpayers to support quality-control measures for published research, as the public rightly demands that scientific research is validated through peer-review and appropriate editorial controls. Any weakening of the peer-review system, as could happen under the proposed policy, would be detrimental to public confidence in important conclusions derived through scientific work.

The Endocrine Society urges you to oppose any policy that would reduce or eliminate the current 12-month embargo period. Reducing the embargo period would have serious and detrimental effects throughout the biomedical research enterprise and jeopardize the system of peer-review that remains the gold standard for evaluating scientific proposals and research results.

We appreciate your consideration and welcome the opportunity to further discuss the impact of this policy. Please do not hesitate to have your staff contact Joseph Laakso, PhD, Director of Science Policy at jlaakso@endocrine.org, if we can provide additional information.

Sincerely,

E. Dale Abel MD PhD
President Endocrine Society

Cc:

The Honorable Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce
The Honorable Russel Vought, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget
Joe Grogan, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy
The Honorable Kelvin Droegemeier, Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy
The Honorable Francis Collins, Director, National Institutes of Health