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Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

----Quality Life Through Research----

February 17, 2005

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
Chair, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Enzi:

On behalf of the more than 65,000 biomedical research scientists represented by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), I am writing to urge the Senate to pass S. 306, the Genetic Nondiscrimination Act. This legislation provides comprehensive protection against discrimination on the basis of genetic information by insurers and employers.

The mapping of the human genome has unveiled a vast, new wealth of information. This data will one day reveal every person's genetic predisposition to a variety of differing diseases. It can be used as an important tool to prevent and treat disease. It can also be misused as a weapon to discriminate against individuals.

Current law does not provide sufficient protection against job loss, health insurance cancellation or denial of coverage as a result of genetic discrimination. Moreover, researchers rely on voluntary participation in research studies to further advance our understanding of the functioning of genes in health and disease. Passage of a federal law against genetic discrimination will eliminate some of the concerns (real or perceived) that have deterred some from participating in genetic research studies or seeking genetic testing.

We thank you for your invaluable leadership on this, and many other important health and medical issues, and urge you to act in the next few weeks to set a floor of basic protections for all Americans from genetic discrimination.

Sincerely,

Paul W. Kincade, Ph.D.
FASEB President