



Science and Technology Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From Nicola Blackwood MP, Chair

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
SW1H 0ET

15 March 2016

Dear Sajid

Government grant conditions and lobbying

The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee is concerned that the “anti-lobbying” clause to be inserted into new grant agreements will create a barrier to evidence-based policymaking and will have unintended effects on the work of select committees.

As you know, scientists make a tremendous contribution to the development of policy in Government and much of their research is supported by Government grants through BIS, its agencies and NDPBs. Researchers also make invaluable contributions to the work of select committees, and they must not be dissuaded from engaging with Parliament.

We are concerned that the Cabinet Office’s announcement has created ambiguity, and that researchers will become reluctant to present to us the policy recommendations that arise from their work. Academics may also become unwilling to take on advisory positions in Government or Parliament, and may even feel uncomfortable speaking at conferences where policymakers are present, for fear of falling foul of this clause.

We understand from Jo Johnson’s evidence to our counterparts on the House of Lords Science Technology Committee last week that BIS is discussing with the Cabinet Office the possibility of an exemption for researchers. I very much welcome these discussions and hope that an easily implementable solution can be found, without any additional burdens on BIS and its agencies in negotiating case-by-case derogations for thousands of researchers.

My committee is pleased to support you in making the case for a clear and simple exemption for researchers, to ensure that Government and Parliament can continue to benefit from the excellent research undertaken in this country. Much is at stake, and I look forward to hearing the results of your deliberations with the Cabinet Office.

Best wish

Nicola

Nicola Blackwood MP
Chair

Cc: Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office