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On September 29, 2016, the House Science, Space, & Technology Subcommittee on Research and Technology held a hearing on restrictive and costly academic research regulations. Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-VA) opened the hearing with a statement declaring the need to “cut the red tape to optimize our nation’s investment in scientific research.”

According to House Science, Space, and Technology Committee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX), up to 25 percent of federal grant funding is spent on complying with research regulations. While this funding is required to satisfy such regulations, its value is removed from the research budget provided by the grant, lessening its support for scientific research. Hearing witness, Dr. Angel Cabrera, George Mason University (GMU) President, stated that while “no one is advocating for weak accountability,” his university could save an estimated \$50,000 in grant funds for scientific research per year if unnecessary regulations were addressed. One such regulation that is blamed for these costs is the Micro-Purchase Threshold, which requires documentation of multiple bids for research equipment that costs over \$3,000.

Research regulations were addressed in the University Streamlining and Harmonization Act of 2016 (H.R.5583), which calls for the creation of a Research Policy Board housed within the Office of Management and Budget and which is tasked with overseeing research regulations and policies to cut costly and unnecessary compliance measures. Additionally, the bill would raise the Micro-Purchase Threshold to \$10,000. The bill was introduced on June 24, 2016 by Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL) and was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Sources: Subcommittee on Research and Technology, Congress.gov, Lipinski.house.gov,
