

FABBS Criteria and Process for Reviewing or Drafting Sign-on Letters and Policy Statements

FABBS is a non-profit organization made up of 29 behavioral and brain scientific societies and over 50 academic departments. Together, we work to advance the understanding of behavior, decision making, and cognition, including the role of brain structure and function in these processes, to improve quality of life through advocacy, communication, and education broadly.

Criteria for signing onto petitions, letters, and position papers

- Directly related to the FABBS mission
- Is non-partisan in nature
- Accuracy of statements is substantiated

FABBS advocacy activities, as outlined in the [FABBS Strategic Overview 2020-2025](#) are guided by the following priorities:

1. Advocate for **robust and sustained funding** for research programs administered by the Institute for Education Sciences, National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, and other agencies that support behavioral and brain research;
2. Inform **efficient and effective federal administrative and program procedures** to best facilitate the advancement of our disciplines while balancing accountability and ethical practices;
3. Strengthen **Federal legislation, policies, and regulations** by communicating knowledge and findings from behavioral and brain science.

To these ends, FABBS both leads and signs community letters on a wide range of topics in all three of these priority areas.

Funding letters: FABBS works to support our full range of disciplines and is careful not to advocate for one portfolio to the potential detriment of another, i.e. reallocating existing funds from one area of study to another among our disciplines.

- Categories of funding letters
 - Annual appropriations: FABBS signs onto annual coalition letters in support of top line budgets for primary federal agencies. The Executive Director (ED) is empowered to, having reviewed these letters, sign on behalf of FABBS. The ED shares drafts with the presidential triumvirate – the current, past, and future presidents - for their awareness.
 - Specific programmatic requests: FABBS often receives invitations to join letters on more targeted funding portfolios, such as mental health research, gun violence or the BRAIN initiative. These letters are reviewed by the ED and Advocacy Coordinator and shared

with the FABBS presidential triumvirate. If the triumvirate does not express serious concerns, the ED may sign on behalf of FABBS.

Administrative practices: FABBS reviews proposed changes to federal policies for potential harmful consequences for our disciplines. Federal efforts to increase accountability or enhance research security can risk unintentionally creating regulatory barriers that inhibit progress or put undue burden. Two examples are clinical trials and the use of animal models. The ED seeks input from board members and council members with relevant knowledge and experience. If no major concerns are identified, the ED will seek approval from the presidential triumvirate. If there is significant disagreement, the ED will bring the letter to the full board of directors for a vote.

Informing legislation and programs: Requests to support legislation are usually shared with the entire board, unless for an endorsement for a previously supported piece of legislation or language explicitly support by FABBS in the past, i.e. collection of accurate and reliable demographic data. FABBS regularly weighs in on legislation that reauthorizes federal agencies funding the behavioral and brain sciences. FABBS also supports legislation that advances agreed upon principles of open science or data collection.

In some cases, FABBS is invited to, or proactively provides policy-relevant research to Congressional offices developing legislation on a wide range of topics. FABBS does not, without a rigorous process, provide a summary of findings from the field. Rather, FABBS would poll our Board and Council representatives for recommendations or provide PIBBS articles or identify Early Career Award winners as potentially helpful resources.

Points to consider to support legislation or regulation:

- Does the legislation or regulation benefit the fields of behavioral and brain science broadly and advance the knowledge and activities of the scientific enterprise?
- Does the legislation create new funding opportunities for our fields?

Points to consider to reject or remain neutral on legislation or regulation:

- Is the legislation or regulation a carve-out for a sub discipline?
- Is the legislation or regulation detrimental to the advancement of our sciences?
- Is the legislation or regulation creating competition for funding between brain diseases or conditions?

Review Process

The FABBS Board uses the following guidelines to determine both the content of and process for developing and approving sign on requests.

Considerations for determining appropriate level of review

- Does the letter align with our advocacy goals? Have potential to advance our sciences?
- Is the topic of broad interest to our members?

- Does the letter include mention of or examples from the behavioral and brain sciences?
- Is this an annual letter, has FABBS signed similar letters in the past, or is this a new topic?
- Who might oppose and what would be the nature of their opposition?

FABBS ED and advocacy staff typically share all sign on requests with the presidential triumvirate providing context and often a recommendation to sign or not sign.

- Letters that clearly fit into the above listed categories can be signed without approval of full board.
- The triumvirate can confirm a decision that FABBS will not sign the letter, these letters will not necessarily be brought to the attention of the full board.
- If any of the three presidents express concern or question about the content of the letter, FABBS staff will share with the full board providing all members with an opportunity to share their perspective. If the signing comes to a vote, signing the letter requires a two-thirds vote of the board.

Considerations for short turn arounds and/or established letters

The Board recognizes that, on occasion, important letters will require a very short turn-around time, potentially limiting consultation. In such situations, as long as they are non-controversial and are compatible with FABBS mission, policies, and/or goals, the Board delegates such sign-on decisions to the ED. In this situation, the ED should immediately inform the Presidential triumvirate for their awareness and monitoring.