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American Physical Society

September 30, 2022

Attn: NSTC Subcommittee on Equitable Data  
Office of Science and Technology Policy  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
1650 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20504

Dear NSTC Subcommittee on Equitable Data:

The American Physical Society (APS) – the largest physics membership organization in the United States, representing more than 50,000 members – appreciates the opportunity to provide a response to the Request for Information regarding the Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity. We strongly support developing standards to improve the Federal government's and the physical science community's ability to make data-informed policy decisions that advance equity for the LGBTQI+ community.

One of the American Physical Society's core values is diversity, inclusion, and respect, and we strive to create and support a diverse physics community. To help improve racial and ethnic diversity in physics, we established and continue to facilitate a National Mentoring Network to increase the number of underrepresented minority students who complete bachelor's degrees in physics. Furthermore, we founded the APS Bridge Program ten years ago with support from NSF to increase the number of physics PhDs granted to underrepresented minorities. Since then, this program has expanded into the Inclusive Graduate Education Network (IGEN), which supports Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students' attainment of doctoral degrees in the physical sciences. While these programs strengthen representation of racial and ethnic minorities in physics, we currently lack the data to even understand or assess LGBTQI+ diversity in physics, much less to strategize effective interventions to support this dimension of diversity. Improved data collection related to LGBTQI+ individuals is needed for us to measure and continue strengthening diversity in our field.

A recently published study<sup>1</sup> of the workplace climate for LGBT+ physicists suggests best practices for future surveys to effectively measure representation and disparities. This study (N=324), also analyzed in the 2016 APS report *LGBT Climate in Physics: Building an Inclusive Community*, found that 22% of LGBT physicists have experienced recent exclusion and 36% have considered leaving their workplace. These effects were more pronounced among transgender respondents, with 49% reporting that they experienced exclusionary behavior in the past year. There were also significant differences between cisgender LGB men and women. This suggests that combining LGBTQI+ individuals into a single statistical group may obscure

meaningful in-group differences and underestimate the severity of disparities for individuals of multiply marginalized identities.

A related report by the UK Institute of Physics, Royal Astronomical Society, and Royal Society of Chemistry titled *Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists* reflected similar findings. In this study (N=1025), 28% of LGBT+ physical scientists had considered leaving their workplace because of the climate or discrimination towards LGBT+ people. Additionally, 16% of LGBT+ respondents reported experiencing exclusion, and 30% reported witnessing exclusionary behavior. This report also noted that effects were more pronounced among transgender and nonbinary participants. Standard questions in federal surveys about exclusionary behavior in the workplace and whether respondents have considered leaving their workplace due to the climate for LGBTQI+ individuals will help to assess disparities and measure progress.

The American Physical Society encourages the federal government to develop data guidelines that will improve the measurement of LGBTQI+ representation and experiences in US physical sciences. For this reason, we also support the passage of the LGBTQI+ Data Inclusion Act (H.R.4176 / S.228) into law. This bill would require federal population surveys to include voluntary questions on gender and sexuality. We strongly support similar efforts within federal agencies to shift standards of practice to include this vital data collection.

Our 2016 report already makes clear that, within physics, discrimination and disparities continue to negatively impact LGBT individuals. However, unlike with other underrepresented groups, including racial and ethnic minorities and women, we lack the data to take full stock of current problems or assess potential solutions' impact. We hope that the Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity will take into account the disparities observed in existing studies, including the meaningful differences in experience between different LGBTQI+ identities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances Hellman" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Frances Hellman  
APS President