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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUITE 2321 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

March 18, 1977

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MICHAEL A. SUPERATA

Dr. Daniel Nathans
Boury Professor & Director
Department of Microbiology
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Baltimore, Maryland 21205

Dear Dr. Nathans:

I would like to invite you to appear as a witness before the Subcommittee on Science, Research and Technology. As Dr. James McCullough of the Congressional Research Service explained to you on our behalf, this hearing is part of the first series of hearings on the science policy implications of the DNA recombinant molecule research issue. It is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on March 30, 1977 in room 2318 of the Rayburn House Office Building.

We hope to obtain an overview of the biology of DNA recombinant molecule research during this initial series of hearings. We would like the participants in this session to work as a panel to reach that objective. Fundamental questions which we hope to address would include but not be limited to such points as: How does the scientific community perceive the risks versus the benefits of DNA recombinant molecule research? How can the risks of DNA recombinant molecule research be weighed against the benefits in the course of making policy decisions regarding the conduct of that research? What factors are of primary importance in making this evaluation? What methodologies in the area of biological risk/benefit analysis are available or under development? To what degree are both the charges of risk and the claims of benefits speculative? How can policy makers distinguish between speculation and reasonable assessment? What benefits will accrue from the research, and to whom? Would changes in patent policies be necessary or desirable from the point of view of commercial firms which want either to conduct or to reap the benefits from DNA recombinant research? What are the long-range science policy implications of decisions now being made with regard to the risks and benefits of DNA recombinant research?

In order to help you plan for your participation, we would like you to consider your role on the panel to be primarily directed toward an objective analysis of the risks you perceive from this research from your perspective as a biomedical research investigator. As other members of your panel, we have asked Dr. Ronald Cape of Cetus Corporation to discuss his views as a potential commercial developer of DNA recombinant molecule technologies; Dr. Ethan Signer of MIT to analyze the risks for application of the DNA technologies in food and agriculture; Dr. Liebe Cavalieri of the Sloan-Kettering


Institute to discuss the overall risks of applying recombinant DNA technologies; and Dr. David Baltimore of MIT's Center for Cancer Research to summarize the risks/benefits debate from his long involvement in this issue.

The first day of these hearings on March 29 will be devoted to an explanation of DNA recombinant molecule research, including discussions of physical and biological containment. The third day, March 31, will be devoted to an explanation of the NIH guidelines, the environmental impact statement, patent policies, and the international aspects of this issue, among other topics.

Your oral presentation should be limited to approximately 10 minutes in order that the Members of the Subcommittee will have the opportunity to ask questions. You are welcome to propose for introduction into the printed hearing record any additional testimony you feel will amplify your statement, or to provide additional illustrations regarding other pertinent issues. Each of the other panelists will be provided similar opportunities, and it is hoped that free discussion following all presentations will highlight points of interest to the Subcommittee.

We have enclosed some additional information concerning testimony preparation, transcript review and reimbursement for travel expenses if appropriate. A copy of the recent Committee print, "Genetic Engineering, Human Genetics, and Cell Biology: Evolution of Technological Issues -- DNA Recombinant Molecule Research," is also enclosed. If you have any additional questions regarding this invitation or your appearance before the Subcommittee, please contact Dr. Gail Pesyna of the Committee staff (phone 202 225-8109).

Sincerely,


RAY THORNTON, Chairman
Subcommittee on Science,
Research and Technology

Encs.