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The Honorable Michael Leavitt
Secretary of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue SW
Room 615F
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

We are writing on behalf of the Medical Library Association (MLA) to congratulate the NIH for taking a major step towards unrestricted access to important biomedical research. The new policy on enhancing public access to archived publications resulting from NIH-funded research will be instrumental in making information more widely and readily available to everyone who needs access to the literature.

We were disappointed that the six-month release was not maintained and that submission of the author's version is not a requirement. While we understand your initial reasoning for both policies, we hope that you will re-evaluate this in the future and move to a required six-month release. We are pleased that the policy will continue to support the peer review process and ensure the permanent preservation of research findings supported by NIH funding.

To support a smooth transition and implementation of the policy, MLA volunteers to assist the NIH in distributing educational materials to researchers and authors through our membership and network of health sciences libraries, especially as this relates to the voluntary electronic submission of the final manuscript. MLA would also be pleased to lend its support to the Public Access Advisory Working Group as the group implements, monitors, and evaluates policy implementation and supports the appointment of a medical librarian to the working group.

Once again, please accept our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for your support of this landmark policy that will further the profession's goal to enhance the quality of healthcare, education and research throughout the world through access to timely, relevant, and accurate health information.

MLA, a nonprofit, educational organization, is comprised of health sciences information professionals with more than 4,700 members worldwide. Through its programs and services, MLA provides lifelong educational opportunities, supports a knowledgebase of health information research, and works with a global network of partners to promote the importance of quality information for improved health to the health care community and the public.

Sincerely,



Joanne Gard Marshall, AHIP, FMLA
President



Carla J. Funk, CAE
Executive Director