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Valerie H. Bonham, Executive Director  
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1425 New York Ave., NW.  
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#### Public Comment: Synthetic Biology

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the emerging field of synthetic biology. This field promises to have an enormous influence on the health and wellbeing of the public. The American Nurses Association (ANA) is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent member nurses associations, its organizational affiliates, and its workforce advocacy affiliate, the Center for American Nurses. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.

These comments refer to the potential benefits that the emerging field of synthetic biology is likely to yield, now or in the future, the risks that may arise, the ethical boundaries that should be considered, and policies and strategies to assure that the public will benefit from these new tools and products. The ANA suggests that the ethical, legal and social considerations are similar in many ways to those encountered in the field of genetics and genomics. A structure with processes dedicated to exploring, identifying and contributing to policy development should be funded in the same way the ELSI program was funded in the Human Genome Project.

Some of the more outstanding concerns are biosafety and biosecurity as well as the philosophical issues important to the profession of nurses. These include definitions of "natural" and "artificial"; the relationships and boundaries among nature, life and technology; fairness in use of and access to the technologies; psychological impact; clinical issues in prevention, treatment and quality; and the potentially wide reaching, global effects on the environment.

The ANA is concerned both for the health of individuals and for the health of the public and realizes that finding a balance is often difficult. We look forward to participating in any dialog, research or policy development that will unfold as the field of synthetic biology matures.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to comment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marla J. Weston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marla J. Weston, PhD, RN  
Chief Executive Officer  
American Nurses Association