The Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 6,800 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in all matters concerning their welfare, academic opportunities, and professional careers after graduation. We support all measures that protect the integrity and quality of scientific research, as well as the ability of researchers to disseminate their work to the broader public. For these reasons, we are in strong support of S.338 The Scientific Integrity Act.

A 2015 Pew Research Center study found that opinions on scientific issues, such as genetically modified foods, vaccines, and climate change, diverge greatly between scientific researchers and the broader public. Because these issues are of great importance to human health, it is essential for the public to have confidence that policy decisions are driven by empirical evidence. As members of the scientific community, we support all actions that can help protect the integrity and value of science in the eyes of the public and policy makers.

We therefore support the Scientific Integrity Act which would require creating specific scientific integrity policies at each federal agency, basing selection and retention for science and technology positions on experience and credentials, developing training to promote ethical standards in research and science communication, and promoting communication of scientific results.

To maintain the integrity of scientific research, improving unbiased research and open dissemination of research findings to other agencies, policy makers, and the public is key. We support efforts like the Scientific Integrity Act to strongly defend the right of researchers and staff at private and public research universities, national laboratories, industrial laboratories, and federal agencies to lawfully disseminate scientific results without fear of reprisal from outside parties and funding sources. Open discourse within the scientific community, and between scientists, policymakers, and the public is an essential component of scientific communication. Open scientific communication ultimately results in higher quality work with broader impact as more stakeholders can make use of relevant results.

Only through a strong collaboration between public decision-makers and the scientific community can we tackle the big challenges that our society faces. For this reason, we encourage our representatives to strengthen and promote the public and political support of independent and impartial scientific research.

Prepared by the External Affairs Board on behalf of the MIT Graduate Student Council