

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Baldwin and Aderholt and Ranking Members Capito and DeLauro:

The undersigned organizations are members of the Friends of NICHD, a coalition of professional organizations, scientific societies, and patient advocacy groups with a vested interest in promoting and sustaining the vital research activities of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

The Friends of NICHD are grateful for the strong, bipartisan support your subcommittees have given the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and NICHD. Thanks to your leadership, NIH has received significant increases in funding in recent years. The Friends of NICHD urge you to continue to support NIH and NICHD in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. Our coalition has endorsed the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research FY 2025 funding recommendation, which would provide the NIH with ***\$51.3 billion in funding. Aligned with this request***, we call for a proportionate increase to NICHD, bringing its funding to ***\$1.891 billion in FY 2025***. We further request that NICHD's base budget in FY 2025 grow at the same rate as the NIH's base budget overall in FY 2025 spending legislation. In addition, we request that any funding provided for the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) funding ***supplement, and not supplant***, the base funding for NIH and NICHD.

NICHD has made extraordinary achievements in meeting the objectives of its biomedical, social, and behavioral research mission, including research on pregnancy; reproductive biology; women's health throughout the life cycle; maternal, child, and family health, including mental health; learning and language development; population health; and medical rehabilitation. For instance, NICHD-funded researchers have recently:

- Identified micronutrients with the potential to counteract the detrimental effects of exposure to toxic metals during early childhood and adolescence.
- Established a prototype gene-based risk score to predict the development and severity of uterine fibroids.
- Found that the amygdala, a structure in the brain found to be enlarged in children diagnosed

- with autism spectrum disorder, begins its accelerated growth in infancy.
- Identified gene pathways in the placenta regulating infant birthweight, information that may aid additional studies to improve fetal growth outcomes and health.
- Developed an approach, with support from NICHD's National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR), for individuals with a powered leg prostheses using data during real-time use of the prosthetic to enhance a user's ability to perform complex activities.
- Determined that depression may be a risk factor for problematic social media use, to the point of it interfering with daily functions of both children and adults.
- Observed that positive parenting may counteract children's biological aging in the face of adversity.

These are just a few examples of the institute's essential work across a broad range of disciplines.

In addition to the institute's important contributions to our understanding of human health and development, NICHD plays a unique leadership role within the NIH by advocating for the inclusion of its populations in research funded across the agency and by acting as a convener and collaborator. The trans-NIH Pediatric Research Consortium (N-PeRC), established in 2018 to better coordinate pediatric research activities across multiple institutes and centers, illustrates this work. The forum has fostered effective collaboration NIH-wide to drive the pediatric research agenda, identify synergies in child health-focused research being conducted in other institutes, and combine resources to fund important cross-cutting studies. NICHD was able to leverage N-PeRC from the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic to quickly identify and fund pediatric research needs.

NICHD has also demonstrated a commitment to advancing research specific to pregnant and lactating women. This commitment is highlighted by the institute's work on the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women (PRGLAC), which developed recommendations to promote the development of safe and effective therapies for pregnant and lactating women and support greater inclusion of this population in clinical trials.

The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRCs) were established in 1963 as "centers of excellence" for research in intellectual and developmental disabilities. The IDDRCs represent the nation's first and foremost sustained effort to prevent and treat disabilities through biomedical and behavioral research. Each year, the IDDRC supports nearly 300 research projects that seek to advance the understanding and treatment of chromosomal conditions and biochemical processes as they relate to brain function and intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. IDDRCs contribute to the development and implementation of evidence-based practices by evaluating the effectiveness of biological, biochemical, and behavioral interventions; developing assistive technologies; and advancing prenatal diagnosis and newborn screening. They also provide invaluable research, training, mentoring, and support to emerging leaders in clinical and biomedical research. Increased funding is necessary for the IDDRCs to continue to advance cutting-edge research and collaboration within the IDDRC network to better understand the neural and biomolecular underpinnings of intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to better inform treatments and interventions. The IDDRC grant budget has remained flat for several years. We request the Congress includes allocated funding for IDDRCs at the same proportional increase to the overall increase to NIH in FY 2025.

With increased support in FY 2025, NICHD will be able to continue funding research and training activities to advance its mission and help unlock the next generation of cures for populations under its

purview. As you consider NICHD's funding level in FY 2025, we request that you ensure the institute's funding level keep pace with the rate of growth at the NIH overall. While we strongly support continued investments in NIH's base funding, investments in NIH have not been shared evenly across the agency in recent years, creating a disparity in resources that threatens to stall continued progress in NICHD's work.

As ARPA-H ramps up its work in targeted research areas and its focus on accelerating the development of commercial products, we urge the Committee to ensure any funding provided for ARPA-H supplement, and not supplant, the base funding for NIH and NICHD.

We thank you for your longstanding support of the NIH and encourage you to make NICHD a top priority by supporting the funding level of \$1.891 billion as you work on the FY 2025 Labor-HHS appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Anthropological Association
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Educational Research Association
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Nurses Association
American Pediatric Society
American Psychological Association Services
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Urogynecologic Society
Association of Academic Physiatrists
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of Population Centers
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism Society of America
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
Endocrine Society
Endometriosis Association
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Global Down Syndrome Foundation
March of Dimes
National Council on Family Relations
Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC) Society
Nemours Children's Health
Pediatric Policy Council
Population Association of America
PUSH for Empowered Pregnancy
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research

Society for Reproductive Investigation
Society of Toxicology (SOT)
Spina Bifida Association
The Society for Research in Child Development

