



November 17, 2003

Elias Zerhouni, MD
Director, National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Zerhouni,

On behalf of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, a national nonprofit advocacy organization whose mission is to advance the ability of every woman to achieve full reproductive freedom with access to the safest, most effective and preferred methods for controlling her fertility and protecting her health, I am writing to offer our support of the National Institutes of Health.

The commitment of the NIH to a broad, yet rigorous, research agenda has yielded significant advances in our knowledge and ability to prevent, treat, and cure numerous diseases and advance the overall health and wellbeing of Americans.

We are concerned by recent reports of political interference in peer reviewed research. We believe scientists at NIH and related institutions should be allowed to, indeed encouraged, to pursue research into important areas of public health, including the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, sexual dysfunction, and substance abuse – conditions which affect millions of women and their families.

I recently participated in a summit hosted by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation to strategize about ways to raise the public visibility of the real and growing threats to women in the U.S. of HIV/AIDS. One of the questions under discussion was what role can the federal government play in this arena. The financial and technical support of basic and social science research is clearly an important contribution and one which NIH has a long tradition of supporting.

We hope the NIH will resist any political pressure to limit research and scientific inquiry into questions which only a small proportion of the American public find morally palatable and will continue to trust in the expert guidance and oversight of your peer review system.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Moore
President and CEO