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December 15, 2003

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

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

On behalf of our constituents, who include African Americans and other people of color in every part of this nation, we write to express our deep concern regarding the ideological challenges to the integrity of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and to the advancement of evidence-based science that recently have been posed by certain organizations and members of Congress. We urge your agency to continue to stand firm in the face of these unwarranted attacks.

Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Inc. (SHIRE) exists for the purpose of helping to achieve health parity and to aid all Americans, particularly racial and ethnic minorities, in attaining optimal health. We are aware of the critical importance of scientific research, particularly studies that will illuminate behavioral and other factors that may impact on the health of vulnerable populations. Of particular concern are the results of research that may aid ongoing efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. As you are well aware, this epidemic has had a devastating impact in communities of color, particularly among African Americans and Latino/Hispanic Americans.

SHIRE is in total disagreement with any efforts that would superimpose subjective views upon the research process. The work of NIH investigators who focus on the health-related behaviors of at-risk populations is critically important if the elimination of health disparities by 2010 is to be achieved.

We fully support NIH in defending the values of objectivity and independence that must be upheld for the protection of the public's health.

Sincerely yours,

Russell J. Davis, D.P.A., M.A.P.T.
President/ CEO

Ruth T. Perot, M.A.T.
Executive Director/COO

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