March 1, 2018

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, & Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, & Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Chairmen Frelinghuysen and Cole and Ranking Members Lowey and DeLauro:

As Members of Congress who value the critical role played by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in better health outcomes, job creation, education, and economic growth, we respectfully request the program level for the agency in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 to reflect the rising costs of biomedical research, should be at least $38.4 billion. Therefore, we respectfully request that the NIH receives an increase of at least $2.2 billion above the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 funding level. At a time of unprecedented scientific opportunity, it is critical that the United States make forward-thinking investments that promote medical breakthroughs as well as our international leadership in biomedical research.

Providing this amount to the NIH would maintain the level trajectory of $2 billion increases for the NIH each year, accounts for biomedical inflation, and ensures that the Innovation Accounts provided through the 21st Century Cures Act supplement the agency’s base budget through dedicated funding to specific programs, as intended. Similarly, the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2018 appropriately recognized the importance of investments in NIH, and we note to the Committee that additional targeted funding resulting from the BBA should supplement the investment in NIH’s base budget.

Over the past two decades, our nation’s investment in NIH has often fallen short of what is needed to meet our research needs and, despite recent progress, past Congressional appropriations for our nation’s greatest research institution have failed to keep pace with inflation. We can already see the wide-ranging impact this lag has had, with dramatically lower grant application success rates and less money available for new researchers seeking their first...
grant. If we do not continue the recent momentum of adequate budget growth, we risk forcing students who are receiving a world-class education at American universities to graduate and seek research positions in China, India, or other nations that emphasize investment in biomedical research.

The critical investments we make in biomedical research are our nation's best hope in finding cures and treatments of diseases that affect millions of Americans. The agency conducts research that is too expensive and risky for private industry to undertake alone but has led to major achievements in our understanding of rare diseases and disorders, as well as historically prevalent diseases like Alzheimer's, cancer and Parkinson's.

In addition to bettering the lives of millions, NIH funding supports over 400,000 non-federal scientists and technical personnel at 2,500 research universities and facilities nationwide. Their work drives the demand for medical supplies and research equipment. NIH funding ripples far beyond its headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland, to benefit manufacturers and suppliers in every state in America.

In light of the difficult budget decisions you face, we want to stress the importance of NIH as a job creator, driver of economic growth, and a vital tool in curbing our nation's soaring healthcare costs. We appreciate your consideration of our request to provide at least $38.4 billion in funding for NIH in FY 2019. Please contact Charlie Arnowitz (Rep. Carson) with any further questions.

Sincerely,

David B. McKinley, P.E.  
Susan A. Davis  
André Carson  
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Albio Sires
Gene Green
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