

Friends of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair, Labor-HHS-ED Subcm.
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member, Labor-HHS-ED Subcm.
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

Thank you for your leadership on funding support for biomedical research and public health. As you consider the FY2024 Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies appropriation bill, the undersigned members of the Friends of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) ask you to provide at least \$50.924 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an increase of \$3.465 billion (7.3%) over the previous fiscal year, to sustain the innovative biomedical research pipeline that generates prevention strategies, treatments and cures for diseases affecting millions of Americans. As part of our overall recommendation for the NIH, we ask you to provide a comparable increase of 7.3% for NIEHS to a total of **\$980.7 million for FY 2024**.

The NIEHS plays a unique role within the NIH. It is the leading institute conducting research to prevent human illness and disability by understanding how the environment influences the development and progression of human diseases and illnesses such as cancer, autism, asthma, Parkinson's disease, autoimmune diseases, chemical intolerance or toxicant-induced loss of tolerance, and chemical sensitivities. Researchers funded by NIEHS have highly relevant expertise, and their research produces data and results that give policymakers, federal agencies, and organizations around the world essential, unbiased science to support informed decision-making to improve public health.

Pregnant women, the developing fetus, and children are uniquely vulnerable to harmful substances in their environment, and the NIEHS plays a critical role in studying these populations. Children are uniquely susceptible to toxicants due to their ongoing development, and they face higher rates of exposure than adults by virtue of how they explore and interact with their environment. To further advance our knowledge of environmental impacts on children's health, NIEHS is leading the Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) program. This innovative program will leverage existing cohort studies to create efficiencies and generate new findings. Importantly, many of the ECHO cohorts recruited patients during pregnancy, enabling us to better understand how the environment affects health from conception through adolescence.

A recent NIEHS-funded study found up to a 20% lower rate of asthma and fewer new asthma cases after air quality improvements were made, including reductions in nitrogen dioxide and PM2.5, and the Southern California Children's Health Study examined new onset cases of asthma in over 4,100 children in the Los Angeles, California area before, during and after air quality improvements.

NIEHS funded investigators examining wildfire smoke exposure during pregnancy in relation to adverse pregnancy outcomes including preterm birth and severe maternal morbidity found wildfire smoke is linked to preterm birth, with more effects in socially vulnerable areas. They continue to link maternal and child health effects to wildfire smoke exposures, which has exceeded levels considered safe for hundreds of thousands of pregnancies over the past several years.

In addition to advancing children's health, NIEHS also leads efforts to study the impact of climate change on human health. Working with several other Institutes, NIEHS published a strategic framework to guide research as part of NIEHS' climate change and human health initiative. Emerging research has already underscored how a warming climate can affect human health through impacts on stress and reproductive health; NIEHS is well-positioned to further advance our knowledge and understanding of this complex environmental and public health crisis.

NIEHS-funded studies have been instrumental in advancing our knowledge about the causes of cancer, including the discovery of the first breast cancer susceptibility gene. In 2019, the NIEHS Sister Study, a national cohort of 50,000 sisters of women who had breast cancer, found that women who use chemical hair dye and chemical hair straighteners have an increased risk of breast cancer, particularly black women. The study results suggest that chemicals in hair products may play a role in breast carcinogenesis and illustrate how environmental factors may influence health disparities.

NIEHS researchers help us understand the links between pollution and a variety of disorders, including neurological conditions. Recent NIEHS-funded studies identified an association between air pollution and Parkinson's Disease risk, with a particular hot spot in the Mississippi-Ohio River Valley.

Finally, NIEHS is also recognized for its unique ability to engage societies and translate research findings to community-level interventions. The NIEHS Environmental Health Sciences Core Center Program includes Community Engagement Cores that facilitate communication between research teams and community representatives to ensure that research goals meet the needs of the people impacted by chemical exposures. The educational resources and other materials developed by these cores often are useful beyond the communities for which they were developed, helping improve knowledge at other sites with similar concerns.

Following on these and other ongoing projects, NIEHS is poised to generate many new and important discoveries about the impact of environmental factors on human health. We therefore ask you to provide \$980.7 million for the NIEHS in the FY2024 Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Geophysical Union
American Lung Association
American Thoracic Society
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Autoimmune Association

Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
Children's Environmental Health Network
Endocrine Society
Healthy Schools Network
Kids for Saving Earth
March of Dimes
National Eczema Association
Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society of Toxicology
The Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research