

FRIENDS OF ORWH

*NIH Office of Research
on Women's Health*

April 1, 2024

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The undersigned organizations, as Friends of the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH), request that within final fiscal year (FY) 2025 appropriations legislation, you provide at least **\$153.9 million for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH)**, reflecting the President's FY 2025 budget request, and support the broader public health and scientific community's request of **\$51.303 billion in base funding for the NIH**, which would allow the agency keep pace with the biomedical research and development price index (BRDPI) and provide meaningful growth of 5% to build upon its research, programs, and initiatives to advance the nation's health.

Given the November 2023 announcement of the [White House Initiative on Women's Health Research](#) and the [latest commitments](#) of departments and agencies across the U.S. government in support of this initiative, now—more than ever—it is imperative to bolster our nation's investment in women's health research to close the gender health gap and improve outcomes for women and their families across the country.

ORWH's role in prioritizing and integrating research across the federal government – as part of the White House Initiative and beyond – cannot be understated. ORWH serves as a vital partner for NIH's Institutes and Centers, ensuring that sex and gender are considered in research and in setting research priorities. In its more than 30-year history, ORWH has [achieved progress](#) in developing and implementing policies to ensure the inclusion of women in NIH clinical research; increasing women's health and sex differences research; implementing new programs to prepare researchers to conduct women's health research; and increasing the focus on

interdisciplinary career development and sex/gender differences across the research continuum.

The White House Initiative on Women's Health Research has shined a spotlight on diseases, conditions, and life stages that only affect women, that disproportionately affect women, and that differently affect women. ORWH has already shown its commitment to improving our understanding of women's health issues:

- As of 2018, [more than half \(51.8%\) of adults](#) had at least one of 10 selected chronic conditions (e.g., arthritis, cancer, coronary heart disease), and of those, 27.2% (68 million) had more than two chronic conditions. Prevalence of multiple chronic conditions was higher among women than in men. Last year, ORWH released two Notices of Funding Opportunities for [Understanding Chronic Conditions Understudied Among Women](#).
- Menopause is a natural life stage that all women will encounter, yet there are still many questions about menopause and its impact on a woman's health, including how the different stages of menopause may affect women's cardiovascular health. In 2023, ORWH hosted the 7th Annual Vivian W. Pinn Symposium, titled "[Menopause and Optimizing Midlife Health of Women](#)," which explored the menopausal transition, menopause in special populations, the influence of social determinants of health on the experience of menopause, and more.
- ORWH launched the [NIH Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Portal](#) to lead to discussion at NIH and beyond on maternal morbidity and mortality and to serve as a centralized hub for information related to this public health crisis.
- When it comes to heart health, women, and particularly Black women, are at increased risk for poorer health outcomes. ORWH continues to support research focused on understudied, underrepresented, and underreported (U3) populations of women through its [U3 Administrative Supplement Program](#) and its webinar series focusing on research on diverse populations.

These focus areas, while crucial, represent only a subset of the issue areas ORWH is working to advance.

The Friends of ORWH recognize that there are many important priorities that Congress will be working to meet this year amidst a tight and uncertain fiscal and political environment. However, providing funding increases to the NIH and its Institutes, Centers, and Offices is among the wisest investments members of Congress can make for the health and security of this nation.

We greatly appreciate Congress's support of ORWH in past funding cycles, which has involved providing funding increases and necessary grantmaking authority for the Office. However, in order for the ORWH to benefit from the grantmaking authority it has been provided, we need to ensure it has the funds necessary to administer grants, hire key staff, obtain physical office

space, and more. A doubling in funding would be a powerful step in allowing ORWH greater opportunity to close some of many gaps that exist within women's health.

Now is the time to build on the momentum surrounding women's health research and make investments today that will improve health and quality of life outcomes for women across the country tomorrow.

Finally, in addition to the Friends of ORWH's recommendation for the ORWH base budget, many of our members have been separately advocating for bolstering robust investments in the recently established ORWH Office of Autoimmune Disease Research (ORWH-OADR), which is taking critical steps to bolster and coordinate our nation's federal research response to autoimmune diseases and conditions, of which it is estimated that [80% of the patients](#) diagnosed are women, and some of which have great disparities among certain racial and ethnic populations, such as Black and Hispanic populations. However, in order for ORWH-OADR to be maximally successful, funding for OADR should supplement, rather than supplant, the foundational investment in the ORWH.

The opportunities to advance women's health are vast, and ORWH is a key partner in unlocking scientific discovery. Therefore, as you work together on FY 2025 spending legislation, the Friends of ORWH reiterate our request for Congress to provide at least \$153.9 million, a doubling of the final FY 2024 base budget, for the NIH ORWH and at least \$51.303 billion in base funding for the NIH.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact Society for Women's Health Research Chief Advocacy Officer Lindsey Miltenberger at lindsey@swhr.org with any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Alliance for Headache Disorders Advocacy
American Heart Association
American Physiological Society
American Medical Women's Association
Black Women's Health Imperative
Center for Endometriosis Care
Endocrine Society
EndPreeclampsia, Inc.
Evvy
Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research (FSR)
G2G Consulting
HealthyWomen
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Women's Health Network
Society for Women's Health Research
Women First Research Coalition (WFRC)
Women's Health Access Matters (WHAM)

Cc: The Honorable Patty Murray
 The Honorable Susan Collins
 The Honorable Kay Granger