Outside Witness Testimony in Support of FY 2027 Funding for the National Institutes of Health

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House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of fiscal year (FY) 2027 appropriations for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We encourage Congress to provide NIH with **at least $51.3 billion** in FY 2027. Please ensure that appropriated funds are spent as intended and that funding for the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) supplements, rather than supplants, NIH's base budget.

AIBS is a scientific association dedicated to promoting informed decision-making that advances biological research and education for the benefit of science and society. AIBS works to ensure that the public, legislators, funders, and the community of biologists have access to information that can guide informed decision-making.

Biological research, including biomedical research, is in our national interest. It advances our understanding of the living world and provides solutions to pressing challenges. Increasing our knowledge of how genes, cells, tissues, organisms, and ecosystems function is vitally important to efforts to improve the human condition. Food security, medicine and public health, national security, economic growth, and sound environmental management are all informed by the biological sciences. Biological research also sustains biodiversity and ecosystem services that support community livelihoods and resilience.

Federal investment in scientific research and development (R&D) fuels innovation and creates jobs. Biological research funded by NIH and other federal agencies helps address national priorities, including emerging infectious diseases, chronic illness, food security, and the growing bioeconomy. The translation of biological knowledge into formal and informal education programs fosters the development of the scientifically and technically skilled workforce needed by employers. Data show that employers continue to seek workers with scientific and technical skills. Between 2013 and 2023, the U.S. science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

(STEM) workforce grew by 26%, a rate nearly three times faster than the 9% growth observed in the non-STEM workforce. This expansion highlights the increasing importance of scientific and technical expertise to the domestic economy, with STEM workers now accounting for 25% of the total U.S. workforce as of 2023.

The loss of biodiversity and its implications for human health are increasingly urgent. As the human population grows and people increasingly come into contact with new environments and species migrating into new habitats, the risk of disease exposure increases. Human, animal, plant, and environmental health are tightly interconnected. The One Health framework (https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/index.html)—recognizing these linkages—has emerged as an effective approach to addressing zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, vector-borne illnesses, and environmental hazards. Advancing this approach requires sustained investment in research on biodiversity, ecosystem change, and climate-related health impacts.

NIH remains the world's largest public funder of biomedical research. Research supported by NIH has improved public health, increased average life expectancy by 6 years between 1970 and 2020, and resulted in effective treatments for illness and disability. NIH awards roughly 60,000 competitive grants each year that support the work of over 300,000 scientists at more than 2,500 U.S. institutions, including universities, medical centers, independent research institutions, and companies. These investments reach every state and nearly every congressional district.

NIH helps drive economic growth. In FY 2025, NIH extramural funding generated an estimated $94.15 billion in economic output—or $2.57 of economic activity for every $1 of research funding—and supported 390,863 jobs nationwide. NIH investments in research also stimulate increased private investment. A $1 increase in taxpayer-funded basic research stimulates an estimated additional $8.38 of industry R&D investment in a particular research area after 8 years. NIH-funded basic research drives the entry of new drugs into the market and provides a positive return on public investment of an estimated 43%. Furthermore, for every $100 million NIH spends on research, it generates 76 patents, which create opportunities for $598 million in further research and development.

NIH's investments in the Human Genome Project and subsequent molecular technologies have resulted in the field of human genomics now supporting over 850,000 jobs, having over $265 billion in total economic impact per year, and yielding a return of investment of $4.75 for every $1 spent.

Beyond discovery, NIH plays a central role in training the next generation of scientists. NIH grants directly support the training of thousands of pre-doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows every year through training grants and fellowships. Support for undergraduate and graduate students is critically important to our research enterprise. These programs are essential to sustaining a skilled biomedical workforce and maintaining U.S. competitiveness.

At the same time, NIH is navigating significant administrative and funding challenges. Recent policy changes, including shifts toward multiyear funding and disruptions to grantmaking, have contributed to declines in the number of new awards. Furthermore, federal courts recently ruled that the mass termination of grants in 2025 for ideological reasons was unlawful, arbitrary and

capricious. These abrupt terminations disrupted the research ecosystem, causing significant personnel instability and stalled clinical trials.

In addition, last year the Administration attempted to cap indirect costs at 15% but the move was ultimately blocked by the U.S. Court of Appeals. Universities and research organizations rely on indirect cost payments to sustain essential research infrastructure, maintain support staff, and ensure regulatory compliance. We encourage Congress to explore the Joint Association Group's Financial Accountability in Research (FAIR) model as a possible approach to ensure transparent and sustainable indirect cost recovery moving forward.

Despite longstanding bipartisan support, federal R&D investment has not kept pace with scientific opportunity or global competition. While the United States remains a global leader, its share of worldwide R&D has declined over the past two decades as other nations, particularly China, have rapidly expanded their investments. Over the decade leading up to 2023, Chinese government R&D spending grew by 90%, compared to 12% growth in the United States, according to data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Furthermore, the Chinese government recently announced plans to increase annual research spending by at least 7% per year for the next five years. Sustained, predictable increases in federal research funding are essential to maintaining U.S. leadership and safeguarding national interests.

Demand for NIH funding continues to outpace available resources. In FY 2025, NIH funded fewer than one in five meritorious grant applications, with success rates dropping from 26% in FY 2024 to 17%. At the same time, multiyear funding awards contributed to an 8.6% decline in the number of new grants. These trends risk discouraging early-career investigators and slowing scientific progress.

We commend Congress for rejecting proposed cuts and providing a slight increase for NIH in FY 2026. However, modest growth is insufficient to meet current and emerging challenges. To remain at the global forefront of innovation and to fully realize the benefits of NIH-supported research, the U.S. government must make bold and sustained investments in NIH.

Unpredictability in funding disrupts research programs, creates uncertainty in the research community, and stalls the development of the evidence-based science that could lead to new treatments or cures. Predictable and sustained growth in funding will allow NIH to keep pace with higher research costs, while also enabling NIH to address existing and emerging health challenges like chronic diseases, intractable cancers, Alzheimer's disease, obesity, and novel life threatening viruses.

Funding NIH at $51.3 billion, an increase of 8.7 percent over the FY 2026 enacted level, would enable the agency to advance priority areas, including chronic and infectious diseases, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, neurodegenerative disorders, mental health, and nutrition science, as well as the application of artificial intelligence in biomedical research. It would also strengthen pandemic preparedness and support programs such as the Next Generation Researchers Initiative, which enables researchers to initiate independent research careers and helps to grow the biomedical research workforce.

Conclusion

Previous investments in NIH have advanced the potential of medical research, supported current and new scientists, and enabled the discoveries of critical diagnostics and therapies, including the unprecedented pace of development of COVID-19 vaccines. Even the weight loss drug Ozempic can trace part of its origins to NIH research on animal venom. Scientists discovered that the toxin from Gila monster lizards had unique physiological effects, which eventually contributed to the development of one of the world's most promising and profitable drugs.

The Administration has requested a more than 12% cut to NIH's budget in FY 2027. We urge Congress to reject this proposal and instead provide NIH with a base budget of at least $51.3 billion in FY 2027. This level of funding is necessary to undo the harmful effects of recent stagnant funding that slowed American scientific discovery. The requested funding will grow and sustain the U.S. bioeconomy and accelerate progress against current and future health threats. Stable and predictable funding will enable NIH to pursue high-impact science while maintaining the infrastructure and workforce necessary for success.

We also urge Congress to ensure that appropriated funds are spent as intended and that funding for the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) supplements, rather than supplants, NIH's base budget. ARPA-H's mission to support high-risk, high-reward research should complement NIH's core role in advancing fundamental science.

Please continue supporting increased investments in our nation's scientific and medical research capacity. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request and for your prior efforts on behalf of the National Institutes of Health.