



March 27, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

Millions of Americans experience disparities in health status and health care quality, including racial and ethnic minority groups, rural populations, low-income populations, and other groups. The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) serves as the lead scientific agency dedicated to improving minority health and reducing health disparities through conducting and supporting research. NIMHD's work aims to understand mechanisms of disease in race and ethnic minority populations, document the root causes of health disparities, to identify effective interventions to decrease those disparities, and to train a diverse research workforce.

As you draft the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations legislation for fiscal year (FY) 2019, **the undersigned members of the Friends of NIMHD respectfully request \$312 million for NIMHD** – an increase of \$8.8 million over the FY 2018 level and \$110 million over the president's FY 2019 budget request.

The Friends of NIMHD appreciate the Subcommittee's support for the Institute and for the continued strong support of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). NIMHD is uniquely positioned to identify the causes of poor health among minority populations, as well as develop and test interventions to reduce and eliminate health disparities and improve minority health. To date, studies supported by the Institute's research programs have generated important evidence about the contributing factors in health disparities including biological, environmental, and societal factors; produced effective interventions for combatting these disparities; and provided leadership within NIH to diversify both the biomedical research workforce and the data sets that are used for NIH research – a critical step in ensuring that the research enterprise is working to address the health needs of all Americans. Specifically, NIMHD has seen success in:

- **Basic Biological and Behavioral Research:** The basic research at NIMHD focuses primarily on identifying biomedical mechanisms and causes of disparities and how these factors interact with social determinants, environmental and community factors to affect health care outcomes. Recently, a NIMHD funded study identified a cohort of molecules associated with the progression to advanced prostate cancer disease that may explain the higher rate of mortality from the disease in African American men.

- **Community-Based Participatory Research:** Through a collaborative effort with the Suquamish tribe and Port Gamble S'Klallam tribe, researchers from the University of Washington were able to develop a socially appropriate intervention strategy to prevent substance abuse among American Indian youth. This work was effective in reducing substance abuse and in increasing cultural identity, cultural practices, hope, and self-efficacy among these youth.
- **Transdisciplinary and Translational Research:** NIMHD supports translational research in an effort to better understand the underlying causes of health disparities. For example, data show that there is a disparity among Hispanic/Latino groups and the incidence of childhood asthma and morbidity rates. To determine if this disparity was caused by ancestry or other factors, NIMHD funded a study examining genome-wide data. This research found that when all other variables are controlled, the likelihood of childhood asthma and childhood deaths from asthma are correlated with whether the groups' ancestry included African lineage.
- **Training the Research Workforce:** NIMHD supports education, training, and outreach programs to expand the knowledge base of research on minority health and health disparities. One new example is the Health Disparities Research Institute, a one-week experience at NIH for postdoctoral trainees and assistant professors to obtain state of the art health disparities science lectures, workshop on writing and grant review, and network with program officers and other scientists. NIMHD has also developed a new Director's Research Seminar Series on the NIH campus that will feature scientists reflecting the broad set of scientific disciplines and topics in disparities research.

The Friends of NIMHD understand the difficult budget environment and appreciate your continued support for investments in health research, specifically health research targeted at improving minority health and reducing health disparities. As demonstrated by the examples outlined above and many more projects supported by NIMHD, the funds appropriated by Congress are making a difference in the lives of Americans across the nation. Continued success in eliminating disparities, however, is contingent upon continued investment in the Institute.

We thank you for your consideration of our request and look forward to helping you promote the important work that is done at NIMHD. Please contact Kristin Rosengren at 202.292.6700 or kristin.rosengren@academyhealth.org with any questions about this letter or to request more information.

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth
 American Academy of Nursing
 American Association for Dental Research
 American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
 American Medical Women's Association
 Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
 Association of Minority Health Professions Schools
 March of Dimes
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National Congress of American Indians
National Health IT Collaborative for the Underserved (NHIT
Collaborative)
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