

FRIENDS OF NIDA

William L. Dewey
Friends of NIDA
Post Office Box 980613
Richmond, VA 23298-0613

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«FormalName»
«CapStreet2»
«CapCityStZip»

Executive Committee

William Dewey (Chair)
College on Problems of
Drug Dependence

Marie Dyak, Entertainment
Industries Council, Inc.

Alexa Eggleston,
Legal Action Center

Karen Freeman-Wilson,
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Eileen McGrath,
American Society
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National Association of
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Abuse Directors

Geoffrey Mumford, American
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Charles O'Keeffe, Virginia
Commonwealth University

Sue Thau,
Community Anti-Drug
Coalitions of America

Jonathan Westin,
National Association of
Alcohol and Drug Abuse
Counselors

Dear «Salutation»,

Drug abuse and addiction represent a major health crisis in America, and create an economic burden of over \$484 billion per year. One way we can and should continue to address this problem is through scientific research. Because of the critical importance of drug abuse research for the health and economy of our nation, we write to you today as the Friends of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to request your support for a 6 percent increase for NIDA in the Fiscal 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. That would bring total funding for NIDA in Fiscal 2006 to \$1,067,040,300. We also support a 6 percent increase for the National Institutes of Health, which would bring its total to \$30 billion for Fiscal 2006.

NIDA is the world's largest supporter of research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute supports a comprehensive research portfolio that has led to our current understanding of addiction as a preventable developmental disorder and a chronic relapsing disease associated with longlasting changes in the brain and the body that can affect all aspects of a person's life.

NIDA's research portfolio is broad and deep, and spans the continuum of basic neuroscience, behavior and genetics research through applied health services research and epidemiology. This work deserves continuing, strong support from the Congress. Some examples include:

New research supported by NIDA and others reveals that drug addiction is a "developmental disease." That is, it often starts during the early developmental stages in adolescence and sometimes as early as childhood. This is a time when the brain undergoes major changes in both structure and function. We now know that the brain continues to develop throughout childhood and into early adulthood. Exposure to drugs of abuse at an early age may increase a child's vulnerability to the effects of drugs and may impact brain development. As a result, NIDA has

increased its emphasis on adolescent brain development to better understand how developmental processes and outcomes are affected by drug exposure, the environment and genetics. Recent advances in genetic research have enabled researchers to start to investigate which genes make a person more vulnerable, which genes protect a person against addiction, and how genes and environment interact. As part of the prevention portfolio NIDA is also involving pediatricians and other primary care providers to develop tools, skills and knowledge to be able to screen and treat patients as early as possible, including patients with mental disorders who may be at a high risk to develop addiction. We know that if we do not intervene early, drug problems can last a lifetime, making prevention a high research priority.

Treatment research is another priority area for NIDA. Significant effort is underway to develop, test, and ensure the delivery of evidence-based interventions to all practitioners and patients across the country. Building on advances from the Institute's basic neuroscience and behavioral research program NIDA has introduced a number of effective medications and behavioral treatments. The Institute also continues to look for more innovative, efficacious, and cost-effective ways to treat patients for a variety of addictions, including addiction to nicotine. NIDA is also using the National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network (CTN) to help respond to emerging public health needs like prescription drug abuse and the increases in patients who are seeking treatment for both substance abuse and mental disorders.

Another priority area for NIDA is curtailing the spread of HIV/AIDS. Because illicit drug use can impact decision-making and increase the likelihood that an individual will engage in risk-taking behaviors, treatment for drug abuse is, itself, HIV prevention. Drug abuse treatment can reduce activities related to drug use that increase the risk of getting or transmitting HIV. NIDA is especially interested in reducing HIV/AIDS rates in racial and ethnic minority populations, which are disproportionately affected by this disease.

Recognizing substance abuse as a disorder that can affect the course of other diseases, including HIV/AIDS, mental illness, trauma, cancer, cardiovascular disease and even obesity is critical to improving the health of our citizens. NIDA has launched several efforts to reach out to numerous professions within the healthcare community to address these issues.

We understand that the FY 2006 budget cycle will involve setting priorities and accepting compromise. However, in the current climate, we believe a focus on substance abuse and addiction, which according to the World Health Organization account for nearly 20 percent of disabilities among 15-44 year olds, deserve to be prioritized accordingly. We look forward to working with you to make this a reality.

Friends of NIDA:

American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American College Health Association
American Correctional Association
American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine
American Psychological Association
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
American Sociological Association
Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse
Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
College on Problems of Drug Dependence
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems
Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.
International Nurses Society on Addictions
Legal Action Center
National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers
National Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors
National Association of Drug Court Professionals
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
National Council of Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
National Families in Action
National Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities (TASC)
Operation PAR, Inc.
Opiate Dependence Resource Center
Partnership for Recovery
Society for Neuroscience
Society for Research in Child Development
The Federation of Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Sciences