

July 12, 2006

Dear (Senators Harkin and Specter, copied to Appropriations committee members):

The undersigned member organizations are writing to thank you for your continued support of the National Institutes of Health. We recognize the enormous challenge you face in balancing competing needs and interests in the appropriations process under extremely tight budget constraints. In light of this challenge, we acknowledge the added difficulty you face in being asked to include \$69 million for the National Children's Study (NCS) in FY 2007.

We applaud the House Appropriations Committee for recognizing the importance of and its support of the NCS. However, we are concerned that the current language in the House Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill would require the NICHD *alone* to spend \$69 million of its current funding to continue the study. We are writing to alert the Senate of our concerns before your bill is completed.

The Children's Health Act of 2000 authorized the development and implementation of the NCS, and designated the Director of the NICHD to spearhead this initiative as a broad-based collaboration of federal agencies, including the National Institute of Environmental Health Services (NIEHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Requiring NICHD to fund the NCS from its current allocation would provide funding in FY 2007 for the study, but it also has the very real potential to cause harm to nearly every other aspect of the NICHD research portfolio. Further, compelling NICHD to absorb the study alone would severely limit NICHD's resources to fund new, investigator-initiated grants. *The Institute's funding rate would drop to the third percentile.* Such a rate of funding would discourage investigators, including young researchers, in a wide range of fields in maternal and child health and human development from applying to the NICHD for grant funding. This would inflict long-lasting damage to the Institute's portfolio of research, capacity for scientific advances, and pipeline of promising investigators.

Since its creation in 1963, the NICHD has made great strides in meeting the objectives of its broad biomedical and behavioral research mission: ensuring that every individual is born healthy, that women suffer no adverse consequences of the reproductive process, that all children have the opportunity for a healthy and productive life, and ensuring the health, productivity, independence, and well-being of all disabled people through optimal rehabilitation. Despite its limited budget, some of the most significant advances in the field of pediatric and reproductive health are attributable to NICHD-supported research. These advances include reducing infant mortality, improving knowledge about learning disabilities, developing newborn screening procedures, preventing birth defects, improving prenatal diagnostic procedures, making pregnancy tests more accurate and available, and reducing perinatal transmission of HIV, and understanding the factors affecting adolescents.

The NCS is intended to advance research in children's health. However, the current language in the House subcommittee bill would adversely affect the Institute's ability to meet its current funding commitments and preclude it from supporting new research and initiatives.

We urge the Senate Appropriations subcommittee to provide new funding to NICHD AND ITS PARTNER AGENCIES if the NCS is to continue. Thank you for considering the complex issues involved in supporting the important work of the NICHD.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
American Anthropological Association
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Physiological Society
American Psychological Association
American Society for Bone and Mineral Research
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Sociological Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Association of Population Centers
Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Easter Seals
Endocrine Society
Epilepsy Foundation
FRAXA Research Foundation
Jeffrey Modell Foundation
National Black Child Development Institute
Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation
Population Association of America
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for the Study of Reproduction