

FY26 Sign On Letter

April 2025

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

The undersigned organizations are members of the Friends of NICHD, a coalition of professional organizations, scientific societies, and patient advocacy groups with a vested interest in promoting and sustaining the vital research activities of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development* (NICHD).

The Friends of NICHD are grateful for the strong, bipartisan support your subcommittees have given the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and NICHD. Thanks to your leadership, NIH has received significant increases in funding in recent years. The Friends of NICHD urge you to continue to support NIH and NICHD in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026. Our coalition has endorsed the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research FY 2026 funding recommendation, which would provide the NIH with **\$51.3 billion in funding**. **Aligned with this request**, we call for a proportionate increase to NICHD, bringing its funding to **\$1.891 billion in FY 2026**. We further request that NICHD's base budget in FY 2026 grow at the same rate as the NIH's base budget overall in FY 2026 spending legislation.

NICHD has made extraordinary achievements in meeting the objectives of its biomedical, social, and behavioral research mission, including research on pregnancy; reproductive biology; impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); women's health throughout the life cycle; maternal, child, and family health, including mental health; learning and language development; population health; and medical rehabilitation. For instance, NICHD-funded researchers have recently:

- Identified micronutrients with the potential to counteract the detrimental effects of exposure to toxic metals during early childhood and adolescence.
- Established a prototype gene-based risk score to predict the development and severity of uterine fibroids.
- Found that the amygdala, a structure in the brain found to be enlarged in children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, begins its accelerated growth in infancy.
- Identified gene pathways in the placenta regulating infant birthweight, information that may aid additional studies to improve fetal growth outcomes and health.
- Developed an approach, with support from NICHD's National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR), for individuals with a powered leg prostheses using data during real-time use of the prosthetic to enhance a user's ability to perform complex activities.

- Determined that depression may be a risk factor for problematic social media use, to the point of it interfering with daily functions of both children and adults.
- Observed that positive parenting may counteract children's biological aging in the face of adversity.
- Confirmed favorable outcomes for the use of pravastatin in women at high risk of developing preeclampsia.
- Developed recommendations and an implementation plan to promote the development of safe and effective therapies for pregnant and lactating women and support greater inclusion of this population in clinical trials with the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women (PRGLAC).
- Advanced cutting-edge research and collaboration within the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRCs) network to better understand the neural and biomolecular underpinnings of intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to better inform treatments and interventions.

These are just a few examples of the institute's essential work across a broad range of disciplines.

In addition to the institute's important contributions to our understanding of human health and development, NICHD plays a unique leadership role within the NIH by advocating for the inclusion of its populations in research funded across the agency and by acting as a convener and collaborator. The trans-NIH Pediatric Research Consortium (N-PeRC), established in 2018 to better coordinate pediatric research activities across multiple institutes and centers, illustrates this work. The forum has fostered effective collaboration NIH-wide to drive the pediatric research agenda, identify synergies in child health-focused research being conducted in other institutes, and combine resources to fund important cross-cutting studies.

NICHD has also demonstrated a commitment to advancing research specific to pregnant and lactating women. This commitment is highlighted by the institute's work on the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women (PRGLAC), which developed recommendations to promote the development of safe and effective therapies for pregnant and lactating women and support greater inclusion of this population in clinical trials.

As you consider NICHD's funding level in FY 2026, we request that you ensure the institute's funding level keeps pace with the rate of growth at the NIH overall. Our public health research infrastructure relies on a capable and qualified workforce, up-to-date data and information systems, and agencies that can assess and respond to public health needs. Investing in a strong research system improves health, ensures innovations in science, and serves society, leading to

new treatments and cures. With increased support in FY 2026, NICHD will be able to continue funding research and training activities to advance its mission and help unlock the next generation of cures for populations under its purview.

We thank you for your long standing support of the NIH and encourage you to make NICHD a top priority by supporting the funding level of \$1.891 billion as you work on the FY 2026 Labor-HHS appropriations bill.

Sincerely,