

American Academy of Pediatrics • American Association on Health and Disability • American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association • American College of Preventive Medicine • American Lung Association • American Thoracic Society • Association of Public Health Laboratories • Breast Cancer Fund • Children's Environmental Health Network • Endocrine Society • Environmental Working Group • Green and Healthy Homes Initiative • Healthy Schools Network • Learning Disabilities Association of America • Lupus Foundation of America • National Alopecia Areata Foundation • National Center for Environmental Health Strategies • National Eczema Association • Natural Resources Defense Council • Society for Occupational and Environmental Health • Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation • Society for Women's Health Research • Society of Toxicology •

March 12, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman, Labor-HHS-ED Subcm.
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Labor-HHS-ED Subcm.
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

Thank you for your leadership on biomedical research and public health. As you consider the FY2016 Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies appropriation bill, the undersigned members of the Friends of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) ask you to provide an appropriation of at least \$32 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We urge Congress to sustain, not curtail, the innovative biomedical research pipeline into prevention, treatments and cures for diseases affecting millions of Americans that has been generated. Within our recommendation for the NIH, we ask you to provide **\$717.7** million for the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) in FY2016.

The NIEHS plays a unique role within the NIH. It is the leading institute conducting research to prevent human illness and disability by understanding how the environment influences the development and progression of human diseases and illnesses such as cancer, autism, asthma, Parkinson's disease, autoimmune diseases and chemical sensitivities. The results of NIEHS research provide policymakers with essential, unbiased science on which to base decisions affecting our health.

The Institute's studies have been instrumental in our new knowledge about the causes of cancer, including the discovery of the first breast cancer susceptibility gene. Using blood samples from women in the NIEHS Sister Study, NIEHS epidemiologists have discovered a difference in the blood methylation of certain genes between women who have breast cancer and women who remain cancer free. This research has revealed how blood methylation profiling holds the potential for early breast cancer detection and risk prediction.

Children are uniquely vulnerable to harmful substances in their environment, and the NIEHS plays a critical role in uncovering the connections between environmental exposures and children's health. Today's pediatric health challenges are chronic conditions such as obesity,

asthma, learning disabilities, and autism; and for all of these health challenges, environment plays a role in cause, prevention, or mitigation. Recent NIEHS funded studies have shown that exposure to traffic-related air pollution (nitrogen dioxide, PM_{2.5}, and PM₁₀) during pregnancy and the first year of life is associated with the development of autism. Additional research on likely biological pathways is needed to determine whether these associations are causal.

Using new imaging techniques, NIEHS-funded researchers have recently discovered how environmental exposures including ultraviolet exposure, chemical compounds in paint, plastics and other consumer products can damage human DNA. These changes result in cell death which may lead to cancer, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular and lung disease and Alzheimer's disease.

In June 2010, the Director of NIH, Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., asked NIEHS to lead a study on the health of the workers and volunteers most directly involved in responding to the Gulf oil spill crisis. NIEHS immediately began working with Gulf communities, as well as agencies, researchers, and outside experts, to design the study. More than 32,000 people from Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and other areas have enrolled in the study. The long-term health study will help determine if oil spills and exposure to crude oil and dispersants affect physical and mental health.

The NIEHS is poised to generate many new exciting discoveries about the impact of environmental factors on human health. We ask you to provide **\$717.7** million for the NIEHS in the FY2016 Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation.

Sincerely,

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