



August 14, 2024

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair, Committee on Energy & Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

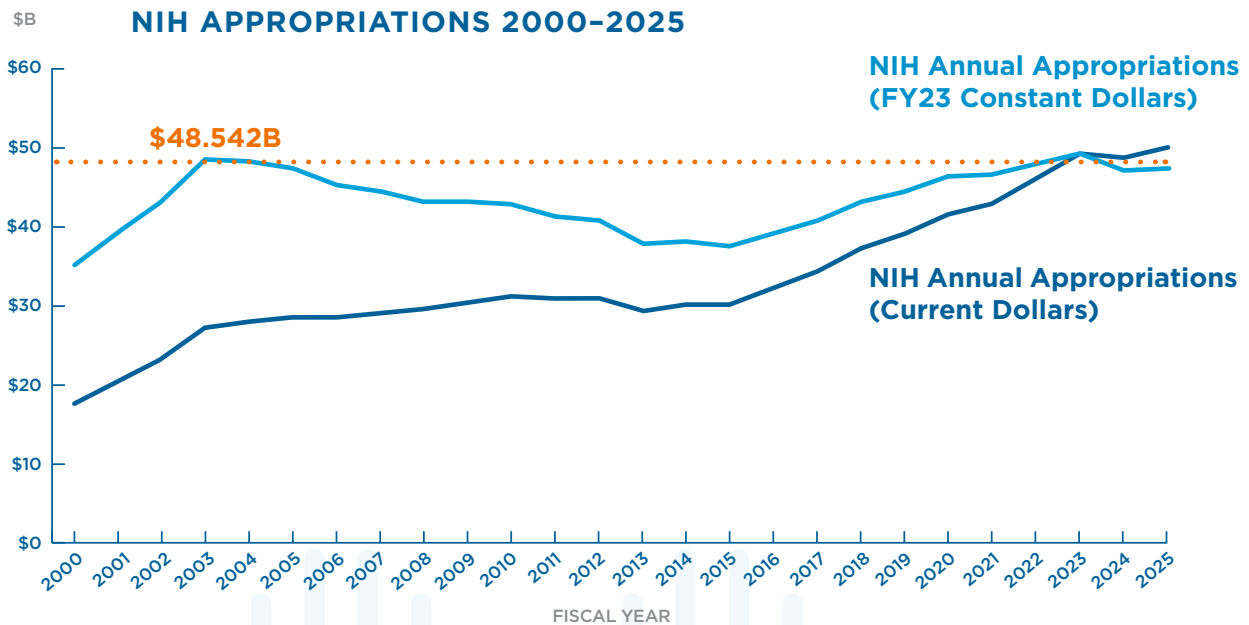
Dear Chairwoman McMorris Rodgers:

On behalf of **United for Medical Research (UMR)**, a coalition of America’s leading research institutions, private industry, and patient advocates, we thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the House Energy & Commerce Committee’s framework for discussion on Reforming the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We are grateful for the Committee’s support for the NIH and the critical role it plays in advancing both the health and economy of our nation.

As the Committee notes in its report, the NIH is the largest single public funder of biomedical research in the world. Importantly, the NIH also is the world’s premier health research agency driving discoveries that have not only changed lives but changed the course of history. There is no question that America’s leadership in biomedical research and innovation is fueled by the NIH, and that the NIH sits at the center of a biomedical ecosystem that is the envy of the world. It is in this context that we offer the following guideposts for NIH reform.

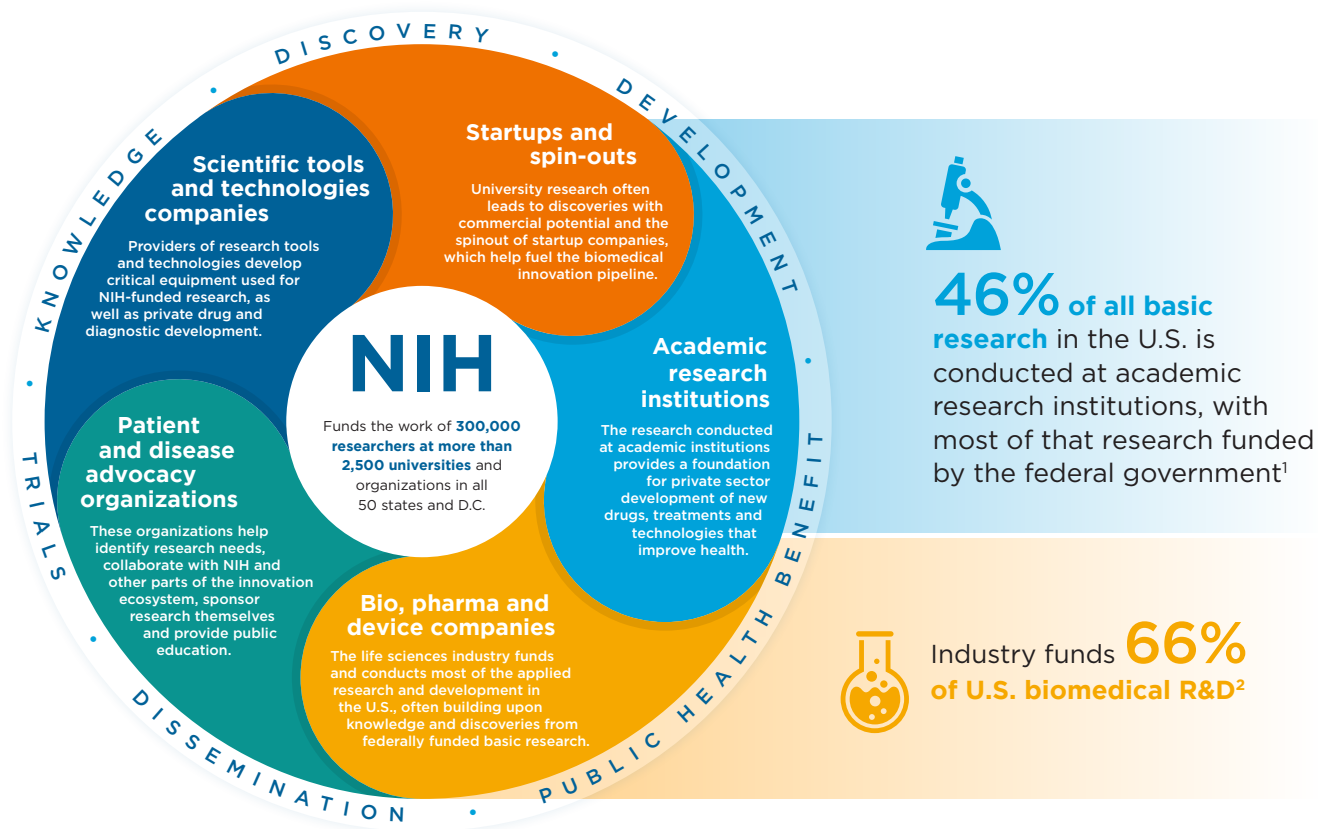
Strong, sustained funding for the NIH is essential

- It is imperative that any contemplated reform or restructuring of the NIH does not impinge on the agency’s fundamental mission of supporting medical research that enhances human health and wellbeing.
- Medical research is an expensive and long process. Discoveries can take years to emerge and often build off earlier work. Disruptions and reductions in funding are highly detrimental to this process, interrupting, delaying and even curtailing important work. Moreover, they can have a chilling effect on talented researchers, particularly those early in their careers, who have often decided to leave the field altogether when faced with an uncertain and unreliable funding environment.
- Since Fiscal Year 2015, the NIH budget has grown by more than \$18 billion thanks to bipartisan congressional support and a commitment to making medical research a critical national priority. This upward momentum helped the NIH catch up from a long period of flat funding. However, the table on page 13 of the Committee’s report illustrates that the NIH still is not keeping up with inflation. Visualized below, you can see that despite the increases, the agency’s relative purchasing power remained below what it was in 2003 every year until fiscal year 2023.



A stable and strong NIH is at the heart of the U.S. biomedical innovation ecosystem

- As the Committee’s report recognizes, the “NIH plays a large and visible role in the training and funding of biomedical researchers, collection and dissemination of health information, and collaboration with the private sector to drive scientific advances.” However, more than playing a role, the NIH *is* what makes America’s biomedical innovation ecosystem so successful.
- NIH research has been the preeminent training ground for generations of scientists, physicians, entrepreneurs and educators, supporting our workforce and helping to ensure America’s continued leadership in biomedical research. More information about the pivotal role that NIH research funding plays in workforce and career development can be found [here](#).
- By funding scientific research that sets the stage for industry-led applied research and development (R&D) activity, the NIH helps fuel the leadership of the U.S. life sciences, medtech and biopharmaceutical industries. As shown below, while the NIH funds a large amount of basic, or foundational, research, industry funds the majority of the later-stage R&D in the United States.
- Continued U.S. preeminence in this area is not a given. Other countries are investing robustly in their biomedical research capabilities and industries with an eye toward usurping America’s global competitive edge.



¹ National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics. (2022). U.S. R&D performance and funding, by type of R&D and sector: 2019 [Figure 18]. In The State of U.S. Science and Engineering 2022.

² Research!America. (2022, January). U.S. Investments in Medical and Health Research and Development 2016-2020.

A strong NIH supports local communities

- More than 80 percent of the NIH budget is awarded through competitive grants to researchers and organizations across the United States. While the primary mission of the NIH is to improve health through research, NIH research funding has an exponential impact that reaches far beyond its original mission.
- Researchers in every U.S. state are recipients of NIH funding. Even before any discoveries are made, this funding has an impact on the local economy. According to a **UMR analysis**, in FY2023 alone, NIH-funded research supported more than 412,000 jobs and nearly \$93 billion in economic activity across the United States. That’s an immediate return on investment of \$2.46 for every \$1 of NIH research funding.
- Significantly, these benefits are not limited to East and West Coast states with major biomedical research hubs. An October 2023 **report** from UMR highlighted the impact of recent increases to the NIH budget on the residents, businesses and economies in rural states. The report found that from 2016-2022 each of the seven states examined benefitted from an average total of more than \$2.2 billion of new economic activity and the addition of more than 14,500 jobs. The report also found that had the NIH budget remained flat rather than grown during that period, much of this benefit would have been lost and had an untold negative impact on research, innovation and public health.





The return on America's investment in medical research through the National Institutes of Health surrounds us every day in the form of more and better treatments, loved ones who are still with us despite devastating diagnoses, vibrant biomedical innovation clusters, globally competitive industries, and hundreds of thousands of researchers who are pursuing life-changing discoveries. We appreciate the leadership of Chair McMorris Rodgers and the entire Committee for undertaking an effort to see how Congress might further strengthen the NIH.

Given the very significant role the NIH plays in our nation's health, workforce and economy, we urge the Committee to engage in an open and deliberative process that includes hearings and continued stakeholder input before advancing any legislative proposals. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide context and feedback for this important discussion and we look forward to future opportunities to weigh in. Please contact UMR President Caitlin Leach (caitlin.leach@northwestern.edu) with any questions.

Sincerely,

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