

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 13, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We write to express our serious concern with the Trump Administration's recent decisions that threaten to undermine the nation's biomedical research infrastructure and set us back generations. The steps the Trump Administration has taken will create a serious funding shortfall for research institutions nationwide, threaten to undermine progress on lifesaving scientific advancements, could cost the U.S. economy billions of dollars, and threaten the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of workers.¹

As the largest public funder of biomedical research in the world, NIH plays a critical role in sustaining the research infrastructure necessary for scientific breakthroughs in cancer treatment, infectious disease prevention, and medical technology innovation, among many others. President Trump has wreaked havoc on the nation's biomedical research system in recent weeks. In his first several days in office, President Trump imposed a hiring freeze, communications freeze, ban on travel, and cancellation of grant review and advisory panels that are necessary to advance research. While some of these efforts have been reversed, they continue to cause confusion and miscommunication among researchers and recipients of NIH funds.

Just last week, NIH announced an illegal plan to cap indirect cost rates that research institutions rely on. In capping indirect cost rates at 15 percent for NIH-funded grants, this policy would cut funding essential for conducting research, such as operating and maintaining laboratories, equipment, and research facilities. This change to NIH's indirect cost rate represents an indiscriminate funding cut that will be nothing short of catastrophic for the lifesaving research that patients and families are counting on. The Administration's new policy means that research will come to a halt, sick kids may not get the treatment they need, and clinical trials may shut down abruptly.

These confusing and harmful policy changes threaten patient safety. The strength of the American research enterprise – recognized as the best in the world – is built on Congress' bipartisan commitment to supporting essential research infrastructure. This funding, which Congress has long appropriated on a bipartisan basis, fuels groundbreaking medical discoveries and cements the United States' position as the global leader in biomedical research.

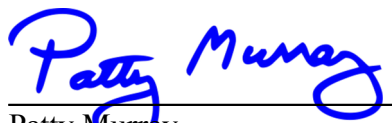
¹ "Research Universities Are Poised to Lose Billions Under Trump's Sudden Cut," The Chronicle of Higher Education (February 8, 2025). <https://www.chronicle.com/article/research-universities-are-poised-to-lose-billions-under-trumps-sudden-cut>

In addition to the stifling impact on discovering new cures and ripping away treatment from those who need it, changes to NIH policy and communications threaten jobs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, with everyone from custodians, to research trainees, to scientists facing potential layoffs. NIH research supported more than 412,000 jobs and fueled nearly \$93 billion in new economic activity in Fiscal Year 2023. Every dollar the NIH invests in research generates almost \$2.50 in economic activity.² These reckless policy changes not only threaten biomedical innovation and research, but also the livelihoods of thousands of workers in every state across the nation.

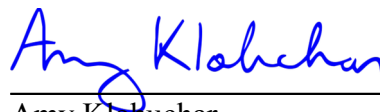
The Trump Administration has left researchers, universities, and health systems with great uncertainty about whether they can continue to support entire research programs and patient clinical trials across the country. Institutions and grantees nationwide are dealing with an unprecedented external communications “pause” enacted by new leadership at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the lack of transparency regarding the Administration’s illegal funding freeze, and the uncertainty of how new Executive Orders would be applied to their critical work. These actions resulted in NIH freezing grant reviews and cancelling advisory meetings, delaying critical funding that scientists need to continue advancing new cures and treatments. These disruptions do not just slow research – they cost lives.

The NIH plays a critical role in our nation’s efforts to fund scientific advancements that improve health and save lives. Our standing as a world leader in funding and producing new medical and scientific innovations has been put at risk by these recent actions from the Trump Administration. We urge you to stop playing political games with the lifesaving work of the NIH and to allow NIH research to continue uninterrupted.

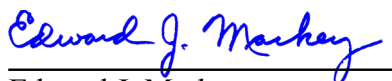
Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

² “NIH’s Role in Sustaining the U.S. Economy: Every State Benefits,” United for Medical Research (March 2024). <https://www.unitedformedicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/UMR-NIHs-Role-in-Sustaining-the-US-Economy-2024-Update.pdf>



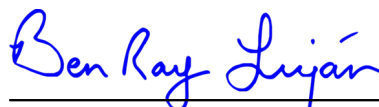
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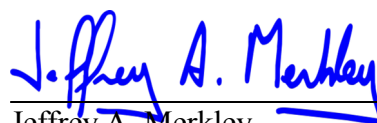
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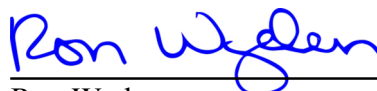
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Mazie K. Hirono
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Raphael Warnock
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Charles E. Schumer
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United States Senator



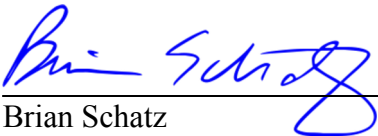
Richard Blumenthal
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Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



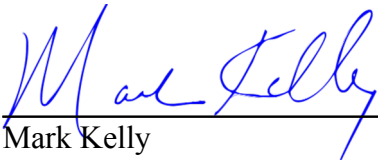
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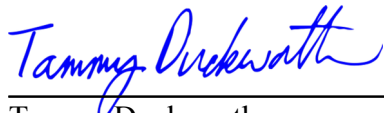
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



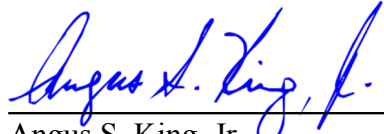
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Tammy Duckworth
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Elizabeth Warren
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John Fetterman
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Jon Ossoff
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