

Driving New Discoveries by Supporting the National Institutes of Health

Recommendation

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of a strong research infrastructure that supports the entire pipeline – from basic discovery research to clinical and community-based research. A reliable, robust budget for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is key to advancing biomedical research and developing treatments and cures that improve quality of life and eradicate disease for patients. The AAMC urges Congress to enact a final FY 2021 Department of Health and Human Services spending bill with at least \$43.7 billion for the NIH, a \$2 billion increase. In addition, the AAMC recommends at least \$15.5 billion in emergency funding for the NIH to advance new COVID-19 research and to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on our nation's research enterprise.

Background

The U.S. medical research enterprise is crucial to developing treatments, cures, diagnostics, and preventive interventions for existing and emerging diseases. The progress in developing countermeasures against COVID-19 is rooted in a strong investment in the NIH's broad portfolio over many decades.

Over half the external research supported by the NIH is conducted by scientists at medical schools and teaching hospitals. Research – from basic discovery research to clinical research – requires sustained funding over many years to improve health for patients, as demonstrated by rapid progress in the development of several coronavirus vaccine candidates less than one year after sequencing the SARS-CoV-2 genome.

We are grateful to Members of Congress for their commitment to medical research by supporting above-inflation increases in the NIH budget over the last five years that has helped to spur additional, critical research. Since FY 2015, Congress has helped the NIH regain some of the ground lost after over a decade of effectively flat budgets that greatly reduced NIH's purchasing power for research. The recent renewed investment in NIH has advanced discovery toward promising therapies and diagnostics, reenergized existing and aspiring scientists nationwide, and restored hope for patients and their families.

Additionally, in response to the pandemic, institutions suspended pre-pandemic research activities beyond critical and/or coronavirus-related research. Institutions and the research community are incurring substantial expenses to resume projects under enhanced safety protocols amid the pandemic, with particular challenges for clinical trials, human subjects research, and the research workforce. Without additional support to recover foundational and applied research underway before the public health emergency, we risk losing ground on a wide array of diseases and a generation of researchers.

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Web Resources

The Value of NIH-Funded Research at Medical Schools and Teaching Hospitals [infographic](#)
NIH Congressional letters of support for robust FY 2021 funding from the [House](#) and [Senate](#)
NIH Congressional letters of support for \$15.5 billion in emergency funding from the [House](#) and [Senate](#)