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November 13, 2023

Submitted electronically to: [RFI \(nih.gov\)](https://efile.nih.gov/)

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the members of the Population Association of America (PAA) and Association of Population Centers (APC), we are pleased to respond to a request from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for public comments on the agency's revised mission statement.

As you may know, PAA and APC are two affiliated organizations that together represent over 3,000 social and behavioral scientists and the over 40 population research centers that receive federal funding and conduct research on the implications of population change. Our members, which include demographers, economists, sociologists, and epidemiologists, conduct scientific and applied research, analyze changing health, demographic, and socio-economic trends, develop policy and planning recommendations, and train undergraduate and graduate students. Their research expertise covers a wide range of issues, including adolescent health and development, aging, health disparities, immigration and migration, marriage and divorce, education, social networks, housing, retirement, and labor. NIH is the primary source of competitive, discretionary grant funding supporting the population sciences. As a result, PAA and APC monitor and often respond to proposed changes governing NIH extramural policy and research activities.

The NIH mission statement is used to inform and guide the NIH Institutes and Centers' (ICs) governing policies and operations. As stakeholder organizations, PAA and APC reference the NIH mission statement in communications with scientists, policymakers, and the general public. The current statement helps reinforce how NIH recognizes the behavioral and social sciences as part of the agency's overarching mission.

That being said, we do **not** believe the revised mission statement undermines NIH support for behavioral and social science research (BSR). In fact, we believe the term "optimize health" clarifies and reinforces NIH commitment to supporting research regarding the impact of developmental, life course events on outcomes, including functioning and longevity. Despite our understanding, PAA and APC urge NIH to clarify its understanding of the language's intent and to reassure the community that the proposed statement does not signal diminished NIH support for BSR.

Thank you for considering our views as you finalize the revised NIH mission statement.
Please do not hesitate to contact us if our organizations can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L Berkman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Lisa Berkman
2023 PAA President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J Brand', with a large, stylized 'J' and 'B'.

Dr. Jennie Brand
2023-2024 APC President