May 23, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human, Education, and Related Agencies Services Senate Committee on Appropriations Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human,
Education, and Related Agencies Services
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro Chair

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human, Education, and Related Agencies Services House Committee on Appropriations

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human, Education, and Related Agencies Services House Committee on Appropriations

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Murray and DeLauro and Ranking Members Blunt and Cole:

The undersigned organizations are members of the Friends of NICHD, a coalition of professional societies and patient advocacy groups with a vested interest in promoting and sustaining the vital research activities of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

The Friends of NICHD are grateful for the strong, bipartisan support your subcommittees have given the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and NICHD. Thanks to your leadership, NIH has received significant increases in funding in recent years. The Friends of NICHD urge you to continue your support of NIH and NICHD in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. Our coalition has endorsed the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research FY 2023 funding recommendation, which would provide the NIH with \$49 billion in funding, a \$3.5 billion increase over the agency's FY 2022 level with additional funding for 21st Century Cures Act initiatives. In light of our support for this funding increase at NIH, we also call for NICHD to receive a proportionate increase, bringing its funding to \$1.816 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, an increase of \$133 million over FY 2022. We further request that NICHD's base budget in FY 2023 grow at the same rate as the NIH's base budget overall in FY 2023 spending legislation.

NICHD has made extraordinary achievements in meeting the objectives of its biomedical, social, and behavioral research mission, including research on pregnancy; reproductive biology; women's health throughout the life cycle; maternal, child, and family health; learning and language development; population health; and medical rehabilitation. For instance, NICHD-funded researchers have recently:

- Developed a new imaging technique to track maternal blood flow to the placenta, which may help diagnose common pregnancy complications.
- Showed that infants of mothers in low-income households receiving monthly cash payments
 were more likely to show faster brain activity in a pattern associated with learning and
 development at later ages.
- Devised a procedure for amputations below the knee that allows for sensory feedback from a prosthetic limb to the nervous system, allowing the person to feel the device's position and

movement, with support from NICHD's National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR).

These are just a few examples of the institute's essential work across a broad range of disciplines.

Further, the institute continues to play an important role answering crucial public health questions about the impact of COVID-19 on children, pregnant women, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and others under the unique purview of NICHD. NICHD-supported research is making strides toward this end by:

- Establishing that COVID-19 vaccines do not reduce fertility and can confer immunity from pregnant women to their newborns.
- Investigating biomarkers in children with COVID-19 to identify those at high risk for developing multi-system inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C), a rare but serious complication associated with COVID-19, through the PreVAIL klds project supported by the NIH Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx) program.
- Developing, evaluating, and implementing strategies for keeping children and staff safely in schools, including work to understand mitigation measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission in schools for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Identifying insights to help improve uptake in COVID-19 vaccine campaigns.
- Studying "long COVID" in children and pregnant women.

This work is essential to the country's ongoing efforts to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the institute's important contributions to our understanding of human health and development, NICHD plays a unique leadership role within the NIH by advocating for the inclusion of its populations in research funded across the agency and by acting as a convener and collaborator. The trans-NIH Pediatric Research Consortium (N-PeRC), established in 2018 to better coordinate pediatric research activities across multiple institutes and centers, illustrates this work. The forum has fostered effective collaboration NIH-wide to drive the pediatric research agenda, identify synergies in child health-focused research being conducted in other institutes, and combine resources to fund important cross-cutting studies. NICHD was able to leverage N-PeRC from the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic to quickly identify and fund pediatric research needs. NICHD has also demonstrated a commitment to advancing research specific to pregnant and lactating women. This commitment is highlighted by the institute's work on the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women (PRGLAC), which developed recommendations to promote the development of safe and effective therapies for pregnant and lactating women and support greater inclusion of this population in clinical trials.

With increased support in FY 2023, NICHD will be able to continue funding research and training activities to advance its mission, confront the COVID-19 pandemic, and help unlock the next generation of cures for populations under its purview. As you consider NICHD's funding level in FY 2023, we request that you ensure the institute's funding level keep pace with the rate of growth at the NIH overall. While we strongly support continued investments in NIH's base funding, investments in NIH have not been shared evenly across the agency in recent years, creating a disparity in resources that threatens to stall continued progress in NICHD's work.

We thank you for your longstanding support of the NIH and encourage you to make NICHD a top priority by supporting the funding level of \$1.816 billion as you work on the FY 2023 Labor-HHS appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association

Alliance for Black NICU Families

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Educational Research Association

American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association

American Pediatric Society

American Psychological Association

American Society for Reproductive Medicine

American Society of Pediatric Nephrology

American Urogynecologic Society

American Urological Association

Association of Academic Physiatrists

Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs

Association of Population Centers

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Children's Hospital Association

Consortium of Social Science Associations

Cure HHT

Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation

Endocrine Society

Endometriosis Association

Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences

Foundation for Prader-Willi Research

GLO Preemies

Global Down Syndrome Foundation

Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI)

March of Dimes

MLD Foundation

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Council on Family Relations

National Fragile X Foundation

National League for Nursing

National Urea Cycle Disorders Foundation

NBIA Disorders Association

Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC) Society

Nemours Children's Health

Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation

Pediatric Policy Council

Population Association of America

Preeclampsia Foundation

PreemieWorld, LLC

PUSH for Empowered Pregnancy

Safe Kids Worldwide

Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention

Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Society for Pediatric Research

Society for Reproductive Investigation

Society for Research in Child Development

Society for Women's Health Research

Society of Toxicology (SOT)

Spina Bifida Association

Star Legacy Foundation

The Fibroid Foundation