

April 11, 2016

Submitted for the Record

Andrea Lowe, Health Policy and Public Health Liaison, Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR)

Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and other Related Agencies.

The Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR®) is pleased to submit the following testimony to the Committee urging a renewed investment in scientific and medical research within the National Institutes of Health (NIH). For over 25 years, SWHR has been widely considered the thought-leader in promoting research on biological differences in disease; dedicated to transforming women's health through science, advocacy, and education. We believe that Congress has a duty to appropriately fund a federal research agenda inclusive of women's health and sex differences research. **To accomplish this goal, we ask for a minimum of \$34.5 billion for NIH appropriations in FY2017 including specific funding for the following Institutes and Offices:**

- **Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH)-\$43 million**
- **National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)-\$302 million**
- **National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)-\$732.2 million**
- **Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)-\$1.441 billion**

Replace the BCA Spending Caps and Sequestration: SWHR was pleased to see an increase to the spending caps as outlined in the Budget Control Act of 2015 and would like to thank the Committee for their hard work to ensure the topline sequestration levels were raised. One of the federal government's primary responsibilities is protecting the health of the public and investing in basic biomedical research to spur the way to the next generation of cures and therapies. Therefore, SWHR strongly disapproves of both the President's budget as well as the one recently released by Chairman Price of the House Budget Committee. Each of these budgets propose significant cuts to nondefense discretionary programs;

including the lifesaving programs supported by the NIH. This means fewer research grants, less opportunities for young scientists to enter the field, and fewer innovative discoveries. While reducing the federal deficit is incredibly important, we remain deeply concerned with the extent of these cuts and believe these policies should be replaced with a consistent and balanced approach to deficit reduction. This approach would place equal value on the roles of both nondefense and defense discretionary programs in keeping Americans healthy, safe, and secure.

National Institutes of Health: The NIH is America's premier medical research agency; serving as the largest source of funding for biomedical and behavioral research in the world. NIH works to promote the overall health and wellbeing of Americans through fostering creative discoveries and innovative research, train and support researchers to ensure continued scientific progress, and expand the scientific and medical knowledge base. Over 80% of its funding is awarded through competitive grants to researchers across the United States and around the world. Another 10% of funding supports the work of researchers within the NIH. Its storied history includes providing financial support for the Human Genome Project, without which the U.S. would not be able to embark on the Precision Medicine Initiative and newly announced "Cancer Moonshot." To foster the next generation of cures, **SWHR recommends that Congress set, at a minimum, a budget of \$34.5 billion for NIH for FY2017.**

Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH): ORWH is the focal point for coordinating sex differences research at NIH and supports innovative mentored career development initiatives such as the Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) as well as supplemental grant funds to assist women and men returning to the scientific workforce. In addition, it provides funding through its Specialized Centers of Research (SCOR) on Sex Differences and Administrative Supplements for Research on Sex/Gender Differences. In 2015, NIH released a new policy for all pre-

clinical research; requiring investigators to submit proposals that balance the use of male and female cells, animals, and tissues in all funded studies. ORWH has been tasked to coordinate and lead data collection on this effort. Each of these programs are designed to use interdisciplinary approaches to explore sex/gender differences across diseases and disorders. **To allow ORWH's programs and grants to continued emphasis of sex and gender research, Congress must direct NIH continue its support of ORWH through continued funding of \$42 million.**

National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD): NIMHD serves as the leader in scientific research dedicated to improving minority health and reducing health disparities. NIMHD funds Centers of Excellence and a Research Endowment Program; each of which are designed to support research opportunities and build capacity within academic institutions to address health disparities. In addition, it supports a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) initiative to engage the community in research activities. One example includes a collaborative effort between Suquamish and Port Gamble S'Klallam tribes and University of Washington researchers to develop a culturally-appropriate substance abuse prevention program for Native youth. NIMHD is deeply engaged with training young minorities to become part of the future scientific workforce through its Minority Health and Health Disparities International Research Training (MHIRT) and other training programs. As a result, **SWHR requests \$302 million for NIMHD in FY2017**—an increase of \$21 million over the FY2016 level and President's budget request.

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS): NIEHS is the leading institute conducting research to understand the environmental influences on health and development; giving it a unique role within NIH. The diseases studied by NIEHS scientists and grantees range from ADHD to Lupus to Uterine Fibroids; all of which can be affected by the air we breathe, food we eat, or environment in which we

work or play. NIEHS has provided scientific leadership in public health emergencies, such as the current water crisis in Flint, Michigan. In this case, NIEHS is coordinating research efforts to understand how to prevent such occurrences in the future and plans to have a long-term role in areas such as supporting health and safety training for pipe workers through the NIEHS Worker Training Program. NIEHS is poised to generate new discoveries that can protect all Americans from toxic environmental exposures. **To facilitate such research, we ask that you to provide \$732.2 million for NIEHS in FY2017.**

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD):

Throughout its 50+ year history, NICHD has achieved great successes in research on child development, maternal and child health, and women's health and reproductive biology among others. Recent studies include understanding the long-term impacts of childhood sexual abuse, prenatal exposure to marijuana abuse, and research to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. NICHD is leading the field in supporting clinical trials in pregnant women, who have historically been excluded even in studies that would advance knowledge of medical conditions and treatments in pregnancy. The development of the crowd-sourcing application, PregSource, to be unveiled in 2016 will allow pregnant women to track their health data from gestation to early infancy as well as access evidence-based information about healthy pregnancies. Unique to this project will be the ability for researchers to connect with NICHD staff to access aggregate data and provide information on clinical trials accepting pregnant participants. **In order to continue the innovative work that NICHD is developing for women and children, SWHR asks that Congress appropriate \$1.441 billion to NICHD in FY2017.**

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we thank you and this Committee for its support for medical and health services research and its commitment to the health of the nation. We look forward to continuing to work with you to build a healthier future for all Americans.