

FRIENDS OF THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH ON WOMEN'S HEALTH FISCAL YEAR 2027 OUTSIDE WITNESS TESTIMONY

PREPARED FOR SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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Testimony Re: National Institutes of Health (NIH)

The Friends of the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) is pleased to submit testimony for fiscal year (FY) 2027 on behalf of ORWH and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The Friends is a coalition of more than 50 organizations representing researchers, clinicians, patients, and policy advocates that support the ORWH in its mission to prioritize research gaps in women's health and biological sex differences across the NIH. For FY 2027, the Friends of ORWH urges appropriators to provide no less than **\$136,480,000 in base funding for the ORWH** and **\$51.303 billion for the NIH**.

For nearly a century, the NIH has been the central driver of medical innovation, consistently demonstrating global leadership in advancing scientific discovery and improving health outcomes for all Americans. Since the 1990s, the ORWH has further strengthened this mission by ensuring that sex differences are systematically integrated across NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices (ICOs). In doing so, it has enhanced the quality, relevance, and applicability of NIH-supported research, advancing how science translates into effective care for all populations.

Recognizing the essential nature of their work and the significant economic and public health benefits that NIH and ORWH deliver, the Friends of ORWH calls for robust funding to ensure that these critical research entities can continue building upon their legacies, driving innovation, and creating a strong evidence base for public health and clinical care.

ORWH

Sex-based differences in health and disease are well established. Biological, physiological, hormonal, and metabolic distinctions between men and women influence how diseases present, progress, and respond to treatment. Incorporating sex as a variable (SABV) is essential to scientific rigor and clinical effectiveness, as research into these differences enables more precise diagnostics, safer and more effective therapies, and improved health care delivery for both women and men.

This work is the cornerstone of the ORWH. The ORWH delivers impact through its cross-functional mandate, working across NIH ICOs to align priorities and reduce fragmentation when it comes to the study of sex differences. Partnerships with Institutes — including but not limited to the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), and the National

Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) — illustrate how the Office integrates expertise across areas like human development, reproduction, environmental exposures, and even cardiovascular health to better understand the root causes of diseases and conditions and how male and female biology influence health outcomes across the lifespan.

The ORWH also houses the Office of Autoimmune Disease Research (OADR-ORWH), an area where coordinated leadership is particularly consequential. Approximately 60 percent of individuals with autoimmune diseases are women, yet the underlying mechanisms remain poorly understood. Established in 2023, the OADR-ORWH leads a coherent research agenda across ICOs, advancing work on genetics, environmental triggers, biomarkers, sex influences and co-occurring conditions that may serve as therapeutic targets. The Office also supports the development of translational research to accelerate the path from discovery to treatment in a class of diseases that is both prevalent and costly (autoimmune disease is estimated to cost more than \$100 billion in national health care costs each year).¹

Many members of the Friends of ORWH advocate separately for increased investments in the Office. While this testimony does not address funding for OADR-ORWH specifically, the Friends would advocate that for the Office to be maximally successful, funding for OADR must supplement, rather than supplant, the foundational investment in the ORWH.

In addition to its coordinating role, the ORWH strengthens the biomedical workforce and research pipeline. Programs such as the [Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health \(BIRCWH\)](#) program provide structured, mentored support for early-career investigators pursuing interdisciplinary research on women's health and sex differences. Administered by ORWH in partnership with other ICOs and, as of 2025, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs through the NIH–VA BIRCWH Scholars Program, this initiative trains investigators to integrate basic, translational, clinical, and health-services research. The [Specialized Centers of Research Excellence \(SCORE\)](#) program is another programmatic highlight of the ORWH, supplying pilot funding, training, and education focused on SABV across 12 centers across the country.

Sustained investment in ORWH is a public health imperative – for better understanding biological sex differences between men and women, for addressing historical gaps in research, and for maintaining international competitiveness. By systematically integrating sex differences into research and investing in the research workforce, the United States will be better positioned to produce high-impact science and lead in emerging fields such as precision medicine. ORWH ensures continued leadership in biomedical innovation and delivers measurable public health and economic returns.

To support the ORWH and allow the Office to continue expanding its high-impact work, the Friends again reiterate its request that appropriators provide at least \$136,480,000 in base funding for the ORWH. ORWH's work contributes to improving the health of women from head to toe and across the lifespan, positively impacting the health of all. The Friends request that

¹ Rosenblum, M. D., Gratz, I. K., Paw, J. S., & Abbas, A. K. (2012). Treating human autoimmunity: current practice and future prospects. *Science translational medicine*, 4(125), 125sr1. <https://doi.org/10.1126/scitranslmed.3003504>

Congress continue to prioritize women’s health research and ensure it is represented and appropriately integrated across NIH ICOs to advance rigorous, reproducible, high-quality research and that, within 180 days from the enactment of FY2027 appropriations, NIH be directed to submit a public report to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees describing how each NIH ICO has incorporated women’s health priorities into its research agenda, including current activities, strategic priorities, and plans to strengthen the integration of women’s health research across its portfolio.

NIH

The NIH supports research across the full spectrum of basic science, preclinical and clinical studies, translational research, and epidemiology. Together, this work builds the evidence base that underpins screening, diagnosis, and treatment across diseases, populations, and the entire lifespan. As the nation’s primary funder of biomedical and behavioral research — through extramural grants to researchers at universities, academic health centers, and independent institutions across the country, and through in-house research through its Intramural Research Program (IRP) — the NIH is foundational for improving population health and for the ability to provide effective, safe, patient-centered care.

With health challenges becoming more complex — as seen in rising rates of chronic and multi-disease conditions and emerging infectious diseases —, both patients and providers are having to navigate increasingly intricate combinations of diseases, risk factors, and treatment responses. These challenges can be even more acute for women, whose biological differences have been understudied for decades and whose health may be influenced by broader factors, such as social, economic, and health systems challenges.

Beyond their public health implications, these medical and public health challenges are driving up the cost of health care, costing the nation \$5.3 trillion in 2024 alone.²

NIH is uniquely positioned to respond to the ever-changing public health landscape. The American public agrees. A recent study by the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) found that nearly 90% of registered voters are in favor of utilizing their taxpayer dollars to fund medical research, and the majority of those surveyed indicated that this should be a top priority for their representatives in Congress.³ These findings are unsurprising, not only due to the NIH’s impact on improving the delivery of clinical care, but also because the NIH delivers

² Hartman, M., Martin, A. B., Lassman, D., & Catlin, A. (2026). National Health Care Spending Increased 7.2 Percent In 2024 As Utilization Remained Elevated. *Health Affairs*, 45(02). <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2025.01683>

³ American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). (2025, September 18). New Survey Finds Overwhelming Public Support for Federal Funding for Medical and Cancer Research. Retrieved March 27, 2026, from American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) website: <https://www.aacr.org/about-the-aacr/newsroom/news-releases/new-survey-finds-overwhelming-public-support-for-federal-funding-for-medical-and-cancer-research/>

real economic value to taxpayers. Every dollar invested in NIH generates \$2.57 in economic activity. In 2025, the agency propelled more than \$94 billion in economic activity.⁴

Strong, sustained investment in NIH ensures continued progress and a robust, growing body of medical knowledge. This funding accelerates breakthroughs, reduces health challenges, strengthens public health, and saves lives. NIH's work is indispensable and must be fully supported.

The Friends of ORWH appreciates the opportunity to submit this testimony and thanks the Senate Appropriations Committee for considering these requests. We look forward to working with you to ensure sufficient and necessary support for federal research agencies in FY 2027. Please reach out to Public Policy and Advocacy Manager Madelyn Adams at madelyn@swhr.org with any questions or for additional information.

⁴ United for Medical Research. (n.d.). NIH's Role in Sustaining the U.S. Economy. In *United for Medical Research*. Retrieved from https://www.unitedformedicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/UMR_2026-Annual-Economic-Report-FY2025.pdf