



SOCIETY OF
BEHAVIORAL
MEDICINE

National Institutes of Health

Protecting the Integrity and Impact of the National Institutes of Health

The Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) represents 2,400+ scientific researchers, clinicians, industry professionals, educators, and students who work collectively to treat and prevent disease through research and interventions that improve the health of individuals, families, and whole communities. Our members focus on behavior change across the lifespan and work in more than 40 specialty areas, including nutrition, cancer, chronic disease, obesity, and physical activity.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the cornerstone of the United States' biomedical, behavioral, and public health research. Through its 27 institutes and centers, NIH supports over 80% of federally funded biomedical and behavioral research, driving breakthroughs in disease prevention, treatment, and population health. The effectiveness of NIH depends not only on robust funding but also on the integrity and transparency of its grant-making and peer review processes.

Recent proposals to reorganize NIH raise significant concerns about the potential disruption of its proven scientific processes, stakeholder engagement, and the continuity of research funding. It is vital that Congress exercise its oversight authority to ensure NIH remains accountable, evidence-driven, and guided by the scientific community and the public it serves.

Importance of an Effective and Transparent Grant Review Process

NIH's competitive grant system ensures that taxpayer dollars are directed to the most promising and high-impact research. Its structured, criteria-based review process promotes fairness and transparency by minimizing bias and ensuring equitable access to funding opportunities. Peer-reviewed grants uphold scientific accountability by supporting evidence-based decision-making and protecting the credibility of federally funded research. Maintaining this transparent, data-driven process also allows Congress to ensure that NIH resources are used efficiently and effectively. The grant review process should not be determined by a senior political official so as to ensure that discretionary awards align with the administration's priorities as proposed by the Administration's Executive Order, but rather they should be awarded based on scientific merit. Ongoing congressional oversight is essential to safeguard this system from political or administrative interference and to preserve the integrity of NIH's mission.

Preserve a Rigorous, Independent Peer Review System

The peer review system is the foundation of NIH's credibility, ensuring that funding decisions are based solely on scientific merit rather than ideology or institutional influence. Independent peer review protects scientific integrity by insulating NIH from political pressures and maintaining objectivity in funding decisions. This process has fueled innovation, leading to transformative discoveries such as mRNA vaccines, cancer immunotherapies, and advances in behavioral medicine—all of which originated from peer-reviewed NIH grants. By incorporating diverse, multidisciplinary reviewers, the system promotes balanced evaluation across biomedical, behavioral, and public health research. Congress should reaffirm its support for NIH's rigorous peer review structure as a cornerstone of scientific excellence, innovation, and accountability.

NIH Reorganization Proposal

The Administration's proposal to reorganize the NIH—including changes to institute structures or funding mechanisms—should not move forward without full congressional oversight and meaningful stakeholder engagement. Congress has a constitutional responsibility to ensure that any reorganization aligns with national research priorities and does not disrupt critical funding pipelines that support life-saving research. It is essential that Congress and the NIH consult with researchers, patient advocates, universities, professional societies, and affected communities to ensure that reforms strengthen rather than weaken the agency's



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mission. Abrupt structural changes risk delaying grant awards, reducing coordination across institutes, and compromising ongoing research on urgent public health challenges. Congress should therefore pause any reorganization efforts until a transparent, consultative process that incorporates scientific and public input is completed.

Provide Robust and Predictable NIH Funding

Sustained and predictable funding for the NIH is essential to maintaining U.S. leadership in biomedical innovation and addressing persistent health inequities. Every \$1 invested in NIH generates an estimated \$8 in economic activity through job creation, medical innovation, and healthcare cost savings. NIH funding also supports the research infrastructure that keeps the U.S. at the forefront of global scientific discovery. Continued investment in behavioral and social science research is particularly critical to addressing chronic disease, mental health conditions, and understanding the behavioral factors that shape health outcomes. Without consistent federal support, promising lines of research risk delay or abandonment, undermining progress in public health and innovation.

Recommendations:

- Congress must intervene and ensure that NIH reestablishes effective processes for the review of grants and distribution of funds to support new and ongoing meritorious research proposals following a rigorous peer review process.
- We ask Congress to exercise its oversight authority immediately and demand that HHS halt any pending changes to the organization of NIH and instead provide a scientific and policy rationale for these changes with an opportunity for Congress and stakeholder comment to ensure that the agency's essential functions are preserved, and the full range of research is realized.
- We urge Congress to pass the final FY 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill that protects the NIH and provides at least \$48.7 billion to support continued growth in medical research funding.