

March 4, 2008

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-218 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1016 LHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Lewis:

As you work to finalize the Fiscal Year 2009 Appropriations bills, we respectfully request you to allocate a 6.5% increase in funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The National Institutes of Health are our country's preeminent research institutions, and represent our greatest hope for finding cures and treatments for the chronic diseases and debilitating conditions that afflict millions of Americans. NIH research is also an essential factor in containing soaring medical costs that threaten the viability of our nation's health care system.

As you are aware, the Administration's budget request proposed funding NIH-supported research at the FY08 enacted level. This flat funding for the NIH is deeply troubling given the high rate of biomedical inflation. The US Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimates that in Fiscal Year 2009, the NIH budget will need to increase by 3.5% simply to maintain its existing purchasing power.

Unfortunately, we have already seen the negative impact on biomedical research when the NIH budget fails to account for increases in inflation. In the short term, this amounts to a reduced number of NIH-funded grants awarded around the country each year. More broadly, inadequate funding for biomedical research delays or ends cutting-edge research, making it more difficult to retain talented American researchers in the United States. Even worse, flat funding further impedes our ability to mitigate or delay the onset of the chronic diseases, which are the greatest contributor to spiraling health care costs.

We understand the challenges facing the Appropriations Committee and the difficulty of addressing priority issues in a time of limited resources. Nonetheless, as you craft this year's Appropriations package, we urge you to consider the wide-ranging positive impact that adequate NIH funding can have on Americans' quality of life and the long-term cost-savings it can produce. We appreciate your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Rep. Edward J. Markey

Rep. David G. Reichert

Rep. Janice Schakowsky

Rep. Christopher Shays

Rep. Joe Courtney

Rep. Christopher Smith