



Coalition to Protect Research

October 5, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The undersigned organizations write to urge you to support the scientific integrity of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) peer review process by removing the following language that was included in the House FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, which would eliminate funding for three peer-reviewed NIH research projects.

Amendment No. 3 offered by Mr. ISSA: At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following: SEC. 524. (a) None of the funds provided in this Act under the heading "National Institutes of Health—National Institute on Drug Abuse" shall be available for grant number 1R21DA026324-01A1 (Substance Use and HIV Risk among Thai Women). (b) None of the funds provided in this Act under the heading "National Institutes of Health—National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism" shall be available for grant number 1R01AA018090-01 (Venue-based HIV and alcohol use risk reduction among female sex workers in China), or grant number 5R01AA016059-03 (Maximizing Opportunity— HIV Prevention in Hospitalized Russian Drinkers).

As you know, in July, the House approved an amendment rescinding funding for three peer-reviewed NIH grants that are examining ways to prevent the global spread of HIV/AIDS in high-risk populations. Prevention of HIV infection is NIH's highest priority for HIV-related research. Scientists need to explore a range of research avenues in vulnerable populations around the world, including female sex workers, injection drug users, women of color, and men who have sex with men, to learn the best ways to control the transmission of HIV. With slow progress being made in the development of effective HIV vaccines and microbicides, the need for additional targeted behavioral approaches is critical. It is vitally important to recognize the devastating impact that the HIV/AIDS epidemic has had on our global health. More than 25 million men, women, and children have already died of this disease and an estimated 33 million people are currently living with HIV/AIDS.

NIH's peer review process is the gold standard for determining the quality and relevance of grant proposals; however, it does not operate in a vacuum. Thousands of scientists from across the country with expertise in their fields of research make independent and objective evaluations of each proposal submitted to the NIH. Advisory councils with public representation also approve projects before they are funded by the NIH. The NIH merit review process is rigorous and exacting, resulting in the funding of less than one grant out of five received. Rescinding funding for individual grants that have been approved through NIH's process not only

Coalition to Protect Research
October 5, 2009
Page Two

undermines the integrity of the world's premier scientific enterprise, but also the work of our nation's top scientists, and ultimately, the public's health.

Congress has an appropriate oversight responsibility for the NIH and has established mechanisms to assist NIH in setting research priorities and responding to changing circumstances - including the recently empanelled Scientific Management Review Board, mandated in the NIH Reform Act of 2006. In addition, NIH has proven to be flexible and responsive to national concerns. To effectively address this public health problem, Congress should signal its support for the scientific process and the scientists who conduct this important work. As you move forward with the consideration of the FY2010 Labor, HHS Appropriations bill, we wanted you to be aware of these issues and we hope that you will consider the importance of preserving the integrity and rigor of NIH's peer review process.

The *Coalition to Protect Research* (CPR) is a coalition of national organizations committed to promoting public health through research. Our organizations represent hundreds of thousands of scientists, physicians, health care providers, and patients who support federal investments in basic and applied biomedical and behavioral research. If you would like additional information, please contact CPR co-chairs Angela Sharpe, alsharpe@cossa.org or 202-842-3525 with the Consortium of Social Science Associations or Karen Studwell, with the American Psychological Association, kstudwell@apa.org or 202-336-5585.

Sincerely,

AAAS

American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry

American Association for the Study of Liver Disease

American Education Research Association

American Foundation for AIDS Research

American Heart Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association

American Sociological Association

Anxiety Disorders Association of America

Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies

Association for Psychological Science

Association of Academic Health Centers

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of Independent Research Institutes

Association of Population Centers

California Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors

California Foundation for the Advancement of Addiction Professionals

Coalition for the Advancement of Health Through Behavioral and Social Sciences Research
College on Problems of Drug Dependence
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council on Social Work Education
Council on Substance Abuse-NCADD, Montgomery, AL
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Foundation for the Advancement of Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Friends of NIAAA
Friends of NIDA
HIV Medicine Association
Indiana University
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
Legal Action Center
National Families in Action
National Primate Research Centers
Population Association of America
Public Health Institute
Research Society on Alcoholism
Society for Adolescent Medicine
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco
Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality
Society for Women's Health Research
Society of Behavioral Medicine
Society of General Internal Medicine
State Associations of Addiction Services
The AIDS Institute
Wayne State University