

Chairman Roy Blunt Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies

Hearing to Review the FY2019 Budget Request for the National Institutes of Health

May 17, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning. Thank you, Dr. Collins and the Institute Directors, for appearing before the Subcommittee today to discuss the National Institutes of Health's FY2019 budget request.

My support for medical research is clear. During my time as Chairman of this Subcommittee, I am proud to have increased funding for the National Institutes of Health by 23 percent, or \$7 billion, in the last three years. This investment nearly tripled funding for Alzheimer's research, started the Precision Medicine Initiative, and targeted resources to such revolutionary projects as the BRAIN Initiative, a universal flu vaccine, and efforts to combat antibiotic resistance.

I stand by an investment in NIH because it has provided millions of Americans and their families with hope. NIH-funded research has raised life expectancy and vastly improved the quality of life for all Americans. In addition, it has lowered health care costs and spurred economic growth by supporting jobs in research and generating biomedical innovations.

However, I understand that it is difficult to always quantify success in medical research. Both this Administration and the last one has proposed cuts to NIH. There is rarely a straight line to success. Not every grant funded will result in a breakthrough. However, this is not the time to abandon our commitment to medical research. The advances made in just the past three years is example enough to show why funding for the NIH is so important.

Three years ago, West Africa faced one of the most devastating infectious disease outbreaks of the last 50 years – Ebola. This disease killed more than 11,000 people in Africa, and became a major public health threat in the United States. Now, the Democratic Republic of Congo faces another Ebola outbreak. In response, the World Health Organization will deploy an Ebola vaccine that appears to provide protection for two years. This has been made possible, in part, due to the support of the National Institutes of Health.

Earlier this month, the NIH launched enrollment into the All of Us study which will collect health information from one million Americans. All of Us has the potential to unlock precision medicine

for the majority of diseases we suffer from today. This initiative will change our health system from one-size-fits-all to personalized medicine.

It is also important to point out discoveries in the revolutionary work of drug repurposing – testing current drugs we know are safe for other uses. There is a current clinical trial targeting the most common of adult leukemia with a drug first approved to treat arthritis more than 25 years ago.

These are just a few examples of how investing in medical research can save lives and shows that this is not the time to back away from our support. As further evidence of the benefits of these investments, the National Academy of Sciences published a report in February that showed that NIH funding contributed to every one of the 210 new drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) from 2010-2016. Let me say that again. Every single drug approved by the FDA over a six-year period had some NIH research associated with it.

The increased funding over the past three years, has also allowed the best researchers in the country to have their research funded to discover the next breakthrough. I am proud to say that the number of grants have increased 2,200 during this period. We finally are in a pattern of long-term investment in medical research.

I have worked closely with Senator Murray and other Members of the Subcommittee to prioritize our commitment to NIH. I know that we will continue to do so this year.

Thank you for being here today.

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