May 18, 2011

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
Building 1 - Shannon Building, 126
1 Center Dr
Bethesda, MD

Dear Dr. Collins,

On behalf of the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) Board of Directors, we are writing today to commend the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for increasing the 2011 Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) stipends by 2 percent.

We recognize that the NIH funding for 2011 came in below the 2010 levels, and so we are very appreciative of this increase. Thank you for keeping your promise to increase the stipends, in spite of reduced funding for 2011.

Based on correspondence with our members, the majority of research institutions across the United States use the NRSA stipend scale as a guideline for compensation of postdoctoral researchers. Thus, the NPA holds to the stance that increasing the entry-level stipend to the more reasonable amount of $45,000 is essential if the United States is to retain the best and brightest new investigators in independent research and development.

We are encouraged to see the 4-percent increase in training stipends proposed by President Obama in his Fiscal Year 2012 Budget. Please know that the NPA understands the need for gradual (but substantial) increases in these stipends, due to the current budget issues facing the U.S. government. We fully support the President’s request.

Additionally, we support increased funding for research and development for the NIH and other Federal agencies who lead U.S. research efforts. We consider such funding an investment in the future of global discovery and innovation and the welfare of the world’s citizens.
Thank you for your support of new scientists. Please do not hesitate to contact us regarding postdoc issues.

Best regards,

Zoe Fonseca-Kelly, Ph.D.
Chair, NPA Board of Directors
Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Pennsylvania

Cathee Johnson Phillips
Executive Director