



February 8, 2021

Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Richard Durbin
Senate Democratic Whip
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable John Thune
Senate Republican Whip
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell, and Whips Durbin and Thune:

On behalf of United for Medical Research (UMR), which represents leading scientific research institutions and industries, and health and patient advocates, we urge you to include \$10 billion in supplemental funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to fulfill grants that have been affected by shutdowns so this premier agency can continue to lead the world in biomedical research and bring this pandemic to an end. The impact of the coronavirus on research in the United States has been [unprecedented](#) and it will take years of work to restore the lost productivity from shuttered labs. According to witness testimony last year from the Director of NIH, Dr. Francis Collins, the coronavirus pandemic has caused over \$10 billion in lost research.^[1] In the most recent COVID-19 relief package passed by Congress in December 2020, Congress did not provide this funding critical to restoring lost research.

NIH has supported much of the critical COVID-19-related research that has been performed across America’s biomedical research community leading up to and throughout the current pandemic. And, with proper resources, there will be much more to come. The following is just a small sample of the [groundbreaking work](#) being done in partnership with NIH:

- The pioneering work for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and the Pfizer vaccine began at the University of Pennsylvania more than a decade ago
- Johnson & Johnson’s Phase 3 ENSEMBLE trial for their investigational COVID-19 vaccine was initiated in collaboration with BARDA and the NIH’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)
- Johns Hopkins produced a study showing the odor-sensing cells in the nose are a key entry point for COVID-19, building tools to better model the spread of COVID-19 and to understand the spread of future pandemics with its tracker and resources, and a new center to research COVID-19 immunity over several years
- Researchers at NIH’s National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) are studying how the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 affects the brain and have conducted the first in-depth examinations of human brain tissue samples from people who died after contracting COVID-19

UMR Members

- AdvaMed
- Alzheimer’s Association
- American Association for the Advancement of Science
- American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
- Association of American Universities
- Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
- BD
- Biotechnology Innovation Organization
- Boston University
- Corning
- Harvard University
- Johns Hopkins University
- Johnson & Johnson
- MilliporeSigma
- Northwestern University
- PhRMA
- Stanford University
- Thermo Fisher Scientific
- University of Pennsylvania
- Vanderbilt University
- Vanderbilt University Medical Center
- Washington University in St. Louis

Because of strong congressional support of NIH in recent years, the agency was well positioned to take on the coronavirus pandemic. However, because of the massive reach and scale of COVID-19, there have been enormous disruptions and delays to most federally supported research and serious and harmful impacts on our nation's research enterprise, especially as grants are time-limited and do not typically account for precious time lost due to a global pandemic.

In fact, without emergency supplemental funding, innovations from pre-COVID-19 research on Alzheimer's, cancer, heart disease and countless rare diseases could be delayed or lost entirely. The long-term consequences would be felt for years to come, both in public health outcomes and in the economy.

As you are acutely aware, it is the research and innovation of previous years that prepare us for today, and today's research that prepares us for tomorrow's biggest public health challenges. Including \$10 billion in supplemental funding for NIH in the COVID-19 relief bill to fulfill original grants affected by the pandemic is an urgent priority for Congress, as our nation works to restart stalled research, keep up with pressing public health challenges, fight COVID-19 and prepare for the next potential pandemic.

Your support of NIH couldn't come at a more critical time. Thank you for your leadership and your focus on tackling COVID-19.

Sincerely,

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President, United for Medical Research

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Associate Vice President for Federal Relations, Association of American Universities
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Board Member, United for Medical Research

Rachel Conant
Vice President, Federal Affairs, Alzheimer's Association
Board Member, United for Medical Research

[1] <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/pharma-and-life-sciences/virus-will-cost-nih-10-billion-in-lost-research-director-warns/>