

FRIENDS OF ORWH

*NIH Office of Research
on Women's Health*

April 11, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs DeLauro and Murray and Ranking Members Cole and Blunt:

The undersigned members, as Friends of the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH), request that you provide a program level of at least \$49 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and at least \$62.5 million for the NIH's ORWH in fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriations legislation. These increases would allow for meaningful growth across NIH and would expand ORWH's capacity to carry out its mission of strengthening research into conditions that differently, disproportionately, or solely affect women; advising on matters related to women's health research; and supporting the advancement of women in the biomedical research workforce.

As the NIH hub for coordinating women's health research, the ORWH ensures women are appropriately represented in the biomedical and behavioral research supported by the NIH. In its more than 30-year history, the ORWH has helped transform what we think of as "women's health," improved our understanding of the possible influences of sex and gender on health and disease, and developed resources to help scientists more efficiently and effectively recruit and retain women participants in clinical studies.

The Friends of ORWH appreciates the recent steps that Congress has taken to specifically support women's health research and the particular attention paid to ORWH—both by designating funding for ORWH in the FY 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) explanatory statement and by requesting that ORWH convene a consensus conference to evaluate research currently underway related to women's health in the FY 2021 appropriations bill.

The congressionally requested “[Advancing NIH Research on the Health of Women: A 2021 Conference](#)” reviewed NIH research across the three pressing public health areas of rising maternal morbidity mortality rates, chronic debilitating conditions in women, and stagnant cervical cancer survival rates. Yet, while the conference was helpful for gaining insight into the important research being done to tackle these three issues, it also revealed that women’s health research, in general, is underfunded. A July 2021 *Journal of Women’s Health*¹ revealed that “in nearly three-quarters of the cases where a disease afflicts primarily one gender, the funding pattern favors males, in that either the disease affects more women and is underfunded (with respect to burden), or the disease affects more men and is overfunded.” This oversight means that a significant portion of the U.S. population is being overlooked, a disservice to research and the U.S. public health system. ORWH will be an essential partner in closing these gaps in knowledge and ensuring that federal research serves everyone.

In addition to its work across NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs), the ORWH is also home to its own programs focused on women’s health and sex differences research:

- The **Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health (BIRCWH)** program is a mentored career-development program that is designed to connect junior faculty, known as BIRCWH Scholars, with senior faculty who have a shared interest in women’s health and sex differences research. Since the program’s inception, the ORWH has awarded 88 grants to 44 institutions, supporting more than 700 junior faculty. The BIRCWH program has been supported by several ICs, including the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and the National Institute on Aging (NIA).
- The **Specialized Centers of Research Excellence (SCORE) on Sex Differences** program, a signature program of the ORWH, is a cooperative agreement program that supports research on sex differences. Each of the Centers, located across the country, serve as a national resource for translational research to identify the role of biological sex differences on the health of women and as hubs for research on sex and gender that provide pilot funding, training, and education.

The increase proposed by the Friends of ORWH for FY 2023 will allow ORWH to build upon its existing programs—such as the BIRCWH and SCORE programs—and take new steps in realizing a vision where sex and gender are integrated into research and where women receive personalized, evidence-based prevention and treatment. We urge you to prioritize women’s health research in FY 2023 by making this funding request a reality.

¹ Mirin AA. Gender Disparity in the Funding of Diseases by the U.S. National Institutes of Health. *J Womens Health (Larchmt)*. 2021 Jul;30(7):956-963. doi: 10.1089/jwh.2020.8682. Epub 2020 Nov 27. PMID: 33232627; PMCID: PMC8290307.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact Lindsey Horan at lindsey@swhr.org with any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth
Alliance for Aging Research
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Heart Association
American Physiological Society
Avestria Ventures
Black Women's Health Imperative
Center for Endometriosis Care
Center for Innovative Research on Gender Health Equity
Endocrine Society
Foundation For Sarcoidosis Research
HealthyWomen
HERhealthEQ
Miles for Migraine
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
Organization for the Study of Sex Differences
Preeclampsia Foundation
Society for Women's Health Research
The White Dress Project
Women First Research Coalition
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
World Health Education Foundation