

Submitted by: Joe Laakso
On Behalf of the Friends of NIEHS
For the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Addressing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) / National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)

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The Friends of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) are pleased to submit the following testimony regarding Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 federal appropriations for the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies in support of the vital work being carried out by the NIH/NIEHS as a result of the annual appropriation provided for this work in the Subcommittee's bill. **We ask you to provide at least \$90.47 million for the NIEHS Superfund Research Program in FY2027.**

Our broad coalition of organizations represent a variety of interests, including medical and scientific professional societies, environment and public health focused organizations, children's health advocates, and many others. Collectively, our community supports and call attention to the vital work being done by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). NIEHS, one of the component institutes and centers of the National Institutes of Health, focuses on the prevention of health problems and diseases with special emphasis on the intimate interactions between our bodies and the environments where we live, work and play over our lifetimes.

The NIEHS Superfund Program (SRP) supports research to address the health impacts from hazardous substances in the environment, develop clean-up technologies for hazardous waste, advance new risk assessment methods, and train the future generation of scientists to work in interdisciplinary research teams to tackle such problems. The SRP provides the scientific foundation used by the Worker Training Program (WTP) to train hazardous waste workers, to accelerate remediation efforts, and to prevent chronic disease and other health consequences related to toxicant exposure. These programs have provided the safety tools and training to transform contaminated sites into new opportunities for residential, industrial, and commercial ventures – which means new jobs for the surrounding community and new sources of revenue for state and local governments.

The SRP's research portfolio and research successes include:

- ***Hypertension and Other Chronic Diseases*** – SRP funded researchers at Columbia university are exploring how exposure to volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including from household products, vehicle exhaust, and emission may increase blood pressure and risk of hypertension.
- ***Pregnancy Complications*** - Researchers at the University of Michigan revealed how exposure to Trichloroethylene (TCE), a widely used industrial chemical frequently found at Superfund sites as a contaminant in soil and groundwater, may have a negative impact on placental growth during pregnancy, which may affect the growth and wellbeing of the baby.
- ***Childhood Asthma*** – Researchers at Louisiana State University are investigating how the presence of environmentally persistent free radicals (EPFRs) in household dust is linked

to persistent wheeze in children. The presence of these emerging environmental contaminants in settled dust inside the home demonstrates their longevity in the environment and the association between EPFR characteristics and wheeze status points to the involvement of oxidative stress.

- ***Hurricanes*** - Researchers at Texas A&M University Superfund Research Program Center are developing methods and tools to predict exposure during environmental emergencies, such as the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey and Florence and to produce applied solutions to mitigate negative effects of environmental disasters on human health. Researchers from Northeastern University are providing water infiltration kits and other support to its study participants in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The researchers are investigating links between the high preterm birth rate of 11.8% on the island, and the extent of hazardous waste contamination there. Puerto Rico has more than 200 contaminated sites that include 18 active Superfund sites.
- ***Groundwater Contaminant Sensing, Tracking and Removal*** - Researchers at MIT are developing ways of using tiny sensors and smart phones to sense and track the movement of emerging chemical contaminants in the environment. Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley are developing a device for convenient on-site treatment to remove lead and arsenic from drinking water.
- ***Addressing PFAS contamination*** – Researchers at Brown University, Harvard and Texas A&M SRP Centers and other SRP-sponsored SBIR projects are heavily engaged in addressing legacy and emerging PFAS contamination, providing urgently needed scientific information on exposure sources, toxicity, and clean-up methods to inform policy, and aiding states and impacted communities.

Congress Must Protect NIH to Ensure Funds are Spent as Intended

Our coalition appreciates that funding for biomedical research has been a longstanding bipartisan priority. However, we are extremely concerned about policies and processes that have prevented NIEHS and NIH from efficiently spending funds and supporting meritorious research grants as intended by Congress. We are grateful that the Committee included language in FY 2026 to limit the total amount of funds NIH may obligate for more than one year under multi-year awards. We respectfully urge the Committee to maintain this guardrail in FY 2027 by continuing to hold multi-year obligations at or below the prior year's level, so that NIEHS can sustain new and competing awards and retain flexibility to address emerging environmental health risks.

Unilateral Restructuring May Disrupt Important Priorities

Our coalition is also concerned about proposals to restructure NIH without a formal authorizing process, including hearings, from Congress. We are particularly concerned about the President's proposal to relocate NIEHS into a consolidated office within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) without describing how NIEHS' programs and strategic research goals would be preserved in the new structure. Research supported by NIEHS plays a unique and important role that is not easily incorporated into other agencies' work. Moreover, as a component institute of the NIH, NIEHS has the ability to collaborate across ICs to ensure that environmental health research priorities are captured in trans-agency projects and cohort studies, while also providing appropriate input on the goals and objectives of individual ICs. Such collaboration ensures that all biological systems and disease areas can incorporate environmental health research to better understand disease prevention and treatment. We also note that the fundamental goals of NIEHS,

while complementary to other agencies, centers, and offices, benefit from being part of NIH due to the focus on fundamental biological discovery and developing new knowledge related to health hazards associated with environmental exposures. Critically, NIEHS focuses on the entire breadth of environmental health, not only 'toxins', and we are concerned that these other research objectives would be lost in the new structure.

Any change to an agency like NIH, which provides funding to all 50 states and supports complex long-term research priorities, should involve forums for stakeholder input, including but not limited to scientists, patients, institutions, and civil society groups. Congress should ensure that changes to the NIH organization and structure have a scientific and policy rationale through the authorization process.

To ensure that the critical activities of this program continue to advance alongside other important national research priorities, we ask the NIH/NIEHS Superfund-related activities receive an increase in funding in Fiscal Year 2027 to a total of at least \$90.47 million, which will help to keep our air, soil, and water safe to improve public health, advance private sector job creation, and bolster the economy. If the opportunity to meet the current investment needs of the NIEHS Superfund Research Program and Worker Training Program is passed by, we risk reversing a variety of public health, environmental, and economic gains of the past 25 years. Thank you for considering our request.