

May 7, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-226, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-255, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the Friends of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), we are contacting you today to request additional funding for NIEHS as part of the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We sincerely appreciate the unprecedented support that Congress has provided for COVID-19 related research through emergency supplemental appropriations thus far, including for the NIEHS Worker Training program. While these efforts will help address the health concerns experienced by American citizens and critical need for expert training for frontline workers as a result of the pandemic, additional resources for NIEHS can address important research questions to help mitigate the effects of COVID-19 while also ensuring better preparedness for future pandemics.

The Friends of NIEHS is a broad coalition including public and environmental health organizations, environmental groups, children's and women's health, and other medical specialty health organizations. We support and draw attention to the important work being done by NIEHS, one of the 27 institutes and centers of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). NIEHS has a unique focus on the prevention of health conditions and diseases with special emphasis on the intersection between our bodies and the environments where we live, work and play over our lifetimes.

As you develop the next phase of an emergency response, we urge you to consider increased funding for the NIEHS. Researchers funded by NIEHS have highly relevant expertise that can be applied to important research questions that will aid our response to this and future pandemics. For example, investing in NIEHS research can augment the Institute's work to accomplish the following:

- Explore the role of environmental exposures such as air pollution in impacting individual susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 infection, or the development and severity of disease
- Help us understand how endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) contribute to chronic diseases such as diabetes that are comorbidities for COVID-19
- Explore the short and long-term impacts of exposure to COVID-19 in children, including whether such exposures increase susceptibility to future illness and learning challenges
- Investigate the role of lifestyle factors as modifiers of the effects of environmental exposures on the development or severity of COVID-19 disease
- Determine the potential health effects of increased personal/community use of disinfection products for COVID-19 control
- Understand mechanisms to further protect health care workers facing occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2.

NIEHS can also leverage its experience with community engagement programs to support the development and deployment of educational or community-based resources and public health strategies that address the environmental factors that impact our resistance to viruses like SARS-CoV2 and mortality from the diseases caused by these same viruses.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is a new disease necessitating an urgent response, it is important that NIEHS continue to support the many other research priorities within its portfolio. It is therefore critical that funds appropriated by Congress to NIH/NIEHS not be offset by future cuts. Supplemental resources in addition to a strong regular appropriation are vital to allow NIEHS to address COVID-19 while maintaining progress on other national priorities.

COVID-19 is an urgent public health threat that requires the effective mobilization of research resources that will enable us to understand the SARS-CoV2 virus and mitigate the effects of infection. Providing NIEHS with appropriate supplemental funds now to address research questions at the intersection of the environment and COVID-19 is critical for the current pandemic, which may include additional waves of disease in the coming months, but also to build a better research foundation to prepare for future pandemics.

We thank you for your leadership in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and your consideration of this request. The Friends of NIEHS look forward to opportunities to work with you during this national emergency. If you have any questions, please contact Joe Laakso at [jlaakso@endocrine.org](mailto:jlaakso@endocrine.org) or Nuala Moore at [nmoore@thoracic.org](mailto:nmoore@thoracic.org).

Sincerely,  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association  
American Geophysical Union (AGU)  
American Thoracic Society  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America  
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Endocrine Society  
Green Science Policy Institute  
Healthy Schools Network  
Lupus Foundation of America  
March of Dimes  
National Center for Environmental Health Strategies  
Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention  
Society for the Study of Reproduction  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research  
The Myositis Association  
The Toxicology Forum

CC: Roy Blunt, Chair, Senate Labor-HHS Subcommittee  
Patty Murray, Ranking Member, Senate Labor-HHS Subcommittee  
Rosa DeLauro, Chair, U.S. House Labor-HHS Subcommittee  
Tom Cole, Ranking Member, U.S. House Labor-HHS Subcommittee