

FRIENDS OF ORWH

NIH Office of Research
on Women's Health

November 9, 2023

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leaders Jeffries and McConnell:

The undersigned organizations, as Friends of the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH), request that you work in a bipartisan manner to expeditiously pass fiscal year 2024 appropriations legislation and—within that legislation—include at least the Senate's recommended funding level of **\$47.8 billion** for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and at least **\$71.4 million** for the NIH ORWH base budget. The ability of NIH, ORWH, and our nation's federal and public health entities to carry out their respective missions is contingent on passing legislation that would allow them not only to keep pace with the biomedical research and development price index (BRDPI) but also to meaningfully build upon their research, programs, and initiatives to advance the nation's health.

The Friends recognize that this year's funding environment is tight and that policymakers are weighing how to support competing priorities in final fiscal year 2024 spending legislation. However, providing funding increases to the NIH and its Institutes, Centers, and Offices is among the wisest investments members of Congress can make for the health and security of this nation. As [Representative Tom Cole \(R-OK\) has said](#):

"Cutting [health research] is penny wise and pound foolish. You hurt your ability to deal with disease in your country — and disease is enormously expensive not just for individuals but society in general."

The Friends greatly appreciate the increases provided to NIH over the past several funding cycles as well as Congress providing ORWH with dedicated funding in the fiscal year 2023 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) omnibus spending package through report language. We urge Congress to build upon that support this year.

As the NIH hub for coordinating women’s health research, the ORWH ensures that women are appropriately represented in the biomedical and behavioral research supported by the NIH and seeks to address health disparities for women and diverse populations of women. 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 influences of sex and gender on health and disease, and developed resources to help scientists more efficiently and effectively recruit and retain women as participants in clinical studies.

In addition to its work to improve the health of women and enhance our understanding of intersectionality, the ORWH funds critically important research that addresses disparities within women’s health as well as areas of growing public health concern. The newly established ORWH Office of Autoimmune Disease Research (ORWH-OADR) takes a critical step to bolster and coordinate our nation’s federal research response regarding autoimmune diseases and conditions, of which it is estimated that [80% of the patients](#) diagnosed are women, and some of which have great disparities among certain racial and ethnic populations, such as Black and Hispanic populations.

While many members of the Friends are separately advocating for bolstering robust investments in the newly established OADR in fiscal year 2024, the Friends of ORWH believe that—for both ORWH and OADR to reach their full potential—funding for OADR should supplement, rather than supplant, the foundational investment in the ORWH. Therefore, we encourage Congress to use ORWH’s base budget as the foundation for providing meaningful increases to the Office in the upcoming and future fiscal years.

The ORWH plays a critical role in our nation’s research enterprise. When women are overlooked, we do a disservice to research and the U.S. public health system. ORWH is an essential partner in closing gaps in knowledge and ensuring federal research serves everyone.

The Friends of ORWH urge Congress to prioritize women’s health research in fiscal year 2024 by making this funding request for ORWH a reality. This would help 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.

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

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Heart Association
American Medical Women’s Association
Avestria Ventures

Center for Endometriosis Care
Endocrine Society
Evy
Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research
Foundation for Women and Girls with Blood Disorders Learning Action Network
HealthyWomen
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Women's Health Network
Society for Women's Health Research
The Fibroid Foundation
The Menopause Society
WomenHeart

Cc: The Honorable Patty Murray
 The Honorable Susan Collins
 The Honorable Kay Granger
 The Honorable Rosa DeLauro