FRIENDS OF ORWH
NIH Office of Research on Women's Health

ADVOCATING FOR THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

For decades, women were overlooked in federal research. Today, many issues that differently, disproportionately, or solely affect women are under researched and underfunded. **Now—more than ever—we must uphold the institutions that are investing in women's health and sex differences research.** By doing so, we can ensure more effective, efficient research; improve treatments; and pave the way for a healthier future for all.

A January 2026 survey from Research!America found that an **overwhelming majority** of Americans believe that medical progress should be a top priority over the next 50 years. Not only that, but **88%** of Americans think it is important that medical research account for sex-based differences. Ultimately, medical research fuels the U.S. economy and safeguards the health of future generations. **The Friends of the Office of Research on Women's Health urge Congress to provide robust investments in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) for the sake of Americans' health, scientific progress, and U.S. scientific leadership.**

This document provides advocates within the Friends of ORWH with key talking points on the ORWH, highlighting its impact as well as the importance of advancing women's health research. These points can be used in meetings with members of Congress and in other advocacy engagements to promote ORWH's mission and secure ongoing support.

ABOUT THE ORWH

- **Established in 1990, the ORWH serves as the NIH hub for coordinating women's health research, ensuring that women are appropriately represented in the biomedical and behavioral research supported by the NIH.** It was established in statute through the *NIH Revitalization Act of 1993*.
- Part of the Office of the Director, the ORWH works with NIH's 27 Institutes and Centers to ensure that women's health research is part of NIH's scientific framework and in the broader scientific community.
- 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 on health and disease, and developed resources to help scientists more efficiently and effectively recruit and retain women participants in clinical studies.

FY 2027 FUNDING REQUESTS FOR ORWH

- **For FY 2027, Friends of ORWH is requesting $136.48 million for ORWH as part of an overall NIH funding request of $51.303 billion.** This funding would allow for meaningful growth in these agencies, better equipping them to support the health and well-being of all Americans.
- **ORWH plays a unique role within the NIH.** It is vital that its work continues and that the Office receive funding to continue elevating and integrating women's health research across the NIH and other federal health agencies.
- **A strong commitment to women's health research builds a healthier, stronger future for everyone.** Prioritizing more rigorous and comprehensive research will lead to more effective prevention, treatments, and care for everyone.

SEX AS A BIOLOGICAL VARIABLE (SABV)

- **Women's health needs are unique and need to be accounted for.** Women experience biological differences—like pregnancy, hormonal cycles, and menopause—that significantly affect how they respond to medical treatments. The ORWH is essential for coordinating research across the NIH on how these unique health factors impact women and ensuring that women are included in research. ORWH helps to guarantee that policies and medical practices are based on comprehensive, sex-specific data, leading to better health outcomes for all.
- **Addressing research gaps improves public health.** Women represent 51% of the U.S. population, yet clinical and basic research has historically overlooked their unique health needs. This research imbalance limits our ability to create treatments that work effectively for everyone. By prioritizing funding and support for the ORWH, Congress can help strengthen public confidence in medical advancements, ensuring they are safe, effective, and inclusive for both women and men.

ORWH played a crucial role in developing the NIH's SABV policy.

ORWH PROGRAMMATIC HIGHLIGHTS

- **Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH):** The BIRCWH program is a success story for the research workforce pipeline. The BIRCWH program is an institutional mentored career-development program designed to connect junior faculty scholars to senior faculty members with a shared interest in women's health and sex differences research. It provides research support for the scholars as they conduct research (whether basic, translational, behavioral, clinical, or health services research) relevant to women's health. The program has graduated more than 750 scholars, the majority of whom have gone on to have productive research careers, publish impactful publications, and received at least one NIH-level grant. Learn more about BIRCWH and its 19 active programs here.

- **SCORE Program:** The Specialized Centers of Research Excellence on Sex Differences (SCORE) program plays a crucial role in advancing our understanding of how biological sex differences impact the health of women. Specifically, these Centers of Excellence across the country serve as a national resource and provide pilot funding, training, and education around research on biological sex. SCORE investigators provide leadership in the development and promotion of standards and policies for the consideration of SABV and sex differences in biomedical research. The SCORE Program remains the only NIH center program supporting disease-agnostic research on sex differences and major medical conditions affecting women in the United States. Learn more about SCORE and where the Centers are located here.

- **Office of Autoimmune Disease Research (OADR-ORWH):** Approximately 80% of patients diagnosed with autoimmune disease are women, and rates of autoimmune diseases and conditions are rising globally each year. OADR, housed within ORWH, prioritizes research into autoimmune diseases. The work being done at OADR allows for greater understanding of how autoimmune diseases manifest in women, ensuring more accurate diagnoses and effective treatments for women suffering from these chronic conditions. Learn more about OADR-ORWH here.

- **Women's Reproductive Health Research (WRHR):** NIH has been at the forefront of advancing research on women's reproductive health. This program, funded through the ORWH and the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), gives early career OB-GYN doctors advanced training and experience in women's reproductive health research. They are mentored by experienced researchers to study areas such as pregnancy care, infertility, gynecologic cancers, and women's pelvic health.