AIRI Association of Independent Research Institutes

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Written Testimony for the Record Submitted by
Association of Independent Research Institutes
for the
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations, United States House of Representatives

Fiscal Year 2019 Funding for the
National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services

April 26, 2018

The Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI) thanks the Subcommittee for its long-standing and bipartisan leadership in support of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We continue to believe that science and innovation are essential if we are to improve our nation's health, sustain our leadership in medical research, and remain competitive in today's global information and innovation-based economy. **AIRI urges the Subcommittee to provide NIH with $39.3 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2019**, in addition to funds included in the *21st Century Cures Act* for targeted initiatives. **AIRI also urges the Subcommittee to push back against the harmful salary support and salary cap policies proposed in the President's FY 2019 budget request.**

First, we would like to deeply thank the Subcommittee for providing an increase of $3 billion for NIH in FY 2018 omnibus appropriations bill. The Subcommittee's support of NIH is strongly demonstrated by these much-needed funds for life-saving biomedical research. However, there is still much more to do. NIH is tackling vast, interdisciplinary problems such as the opioid crisis, the development of a universal flu vaccine, and the widespread problem of

obesity, but the last several years of budget uncertainty has made it difficult for the agency to predictably fund new and ongoing grants and consider new initiatives necessary to improving human health. To ensure cutting-edge research at independent research institutes is not disrupted, AIRI strongly supports enactment of a final FY 2019 spending bill with $39.3 billion for NIH.

AIRI is a national organization of more than 90 independent, non-profit research institutes that perform basic and clinical research in the biological and behavioral sciences. AIRI institutes vary in size, with budgets ranging from a few million to hundreds of millions of dollars. In addition, each AIRI member institution is governed by its own independent Board of Directors, which allows our members to focus on discovery-based research while remaining structurally nimble and capable of adjusting their research programs to emerging areas of inquiry. Investigators at independent research institutes consistently exceed the success rates of the overall NIH grantee pool, and they receive about ten percent of NIH's peer-reviewed, competitively-awarded extramural grants.

The partnership between NIH and America's scientists, research institutions, universities, and medical schools is unique and highly-productive, leveraging the full strength of our nation's research enterprise to foster discovery, improve our understanding of the underlying cause of disease, and develop the next generation of medical advancements that deliver more treatments and cures to patients. Not only is NIH research essential to advancing health, it also plays a key economic role in communities nationwide.

In FY 2017, NIH invested $26.1 billion, or over 75 percent of its budget, in the biomedical research community. This investment supported more than 400,000 research positions and

generated nearly $69 billion in economic activity across the U.S. AIRI member institutes are particularly relevant in this regard, as they are located across the country, including in many smaller or less-populated states that do not have major academic research institutions. In many of these regions, independent research institutes are major employers and local economic engines, and they exemplify the positive impact of investing in research and science.

The NIH model for conducting biomedical research, which involves supporting scientists at universities, medical centers, and independent research institutes, provides an effective approach to making fundamental discoveries in the laboratory that can be translated into medical advances that save lives. AIRI member institutions are private, stand-alone research centers that set their sights on the vast frontiers of medical science. However, AIRI member institutes are especially vulnerable to reductions in the NIH budget, as they do not have other reliable sources of revenue to make up the shortfall.

In addition, AIRI member institutes oppose the harmful proposals in the President's FY 2019 budget request to reduce the salary cap to Executive Level V from Executive Level II for extramural researchers and the proposal to cap the amount of investigator salary payable on a grant. These policies would disproportionately affect early-career investigators and independent research institutes. They hinder AIRI members' research missions and their ability to recruit and retain talented researchers. The caps also negatively affect the confidence of future researchers in the viability of a career in biomedical sciences, severely harming the competitiveness and capacity of the U.S. biomedical enterprise. The continued success of the biomedical research enterprise relies heavily on the imagination and dedication of a diverse and talented scientific workforce. NIH initiatives focusing on career development and

recruitment of a diverse scientific workforce are vital to innovation in biomedical research and public health. However, one of the most destructive and long-lasting impacts of the NIH budget's instability is on the next generation of scientists, who have seen training funds slashed and the possibility of sustaining a career in research diminished.

The federal government has an irreplaceable role in supporting investigators and medical research. No other public, corporate, or charitable entity is willing or able to provide the broad and sustained funding for the cutting-edge research necessary to yield new innovations and technologies of the future. NIH supports long-term competitiveness for American workers, forming one of the key foundations for U.S. industries like biotechnology, medical devices, and pharmaceutical development, among others. Unfortunately, continued erosion of the national commitment to medical research could threaten our ability to support a medical research enterprise that can take full advantage of existing and emerging scientific opportunities.

The U.S. has the most robust medical research capacity in the world, but our leadership in biomedical research is being compromised by the investments being made in the research capacity of other nations, such as China. While the most recent $3 billion increase to the NIH budget will greatly help sustain biomedical research in the U.S., it is important to continue providing stable funding to uphold our biomedical excellence.

AIRI member institutes' flexibility and research-only missions provide an environment particularly conducive to creativity and innovation. Independent research institutes possess a unique versatility and culture that encourages them to share expertise, information, and equipment across research institutions, as well as neighboring universities. These collaborative

activities help minimize bureaucracy and increase efficiency, allowing for fruitful partnerships in a variety of disciplines and industries. Also, unlike institutes of higher education, AIRI member institutes focus primarily on scientific inquiry and discovery, allowing them to respond quickly to the research needs of the nation.

AIRI deeply thanks the Subcommittee for its important work dedicated to ensuring the health of the nation, and we appreciate this opportunity to urge the Subcommittee to continue the success of NIH by **providing $39.3 billion in FY 2019,** in addition to funds included in the *21st Century Cures Act* for targeted initiatives, and **pushing back against the President's proposal to cap investigator salaries and limit the amount of salary payable from a grant,** as the next step toward a multi-year increase in our nation's investment in life-saving medical research.