

Written Statement
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Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Appropriations Committee
In Support of FY26 Appropriations for the National Institutes of Health

Chair Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the Society for Neuroscience (SfN), I am honored to present this testimony in support of robust appropriations for biomedical research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). SfN urges you to provide at least \$51.303 billion, an increase of \$4.222 billion, in base-level funding for the NIH for FY26 and \$680 million for the Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative. For researchers across the nation, the ability to make life-changing advancements in the field of neuroscience is contingent upon significant and sustained federal funding.

One area of my lab's research at the University of California, Davis focuses on the neurobiology of aging and neurodegenerative disorders, particularly as they relate to cellular and synaptic organization of the cerebral cortex. My lab is developing a comprehensive model of synaptic health in the cerebral cortex and how molecular and structural deviations from this profile induced by age and Alzheimer's Disease impact cortical circuitry and cognitive performance. Continued progress depends on sustained federal funding at a level that at a minimum, keeps pace with inflation.

The Importance of the Research Continuum

SfN believes strongly in the research continuum—a pipeline, in which basic science leads to clinical innovations, which leads to translational uses impacting the public's health, reducing long-term medical costs and generating new jobs across the country. Basic science is the foundation upon which all health advances are built. To cure diseases, we need to understand them through fundamental discovery-based research. SfN is grateful to Congress for its investments in biomedical research, but it is critical that funding is sustained to achieve the goals of these investments.

NIH funding for basic research is not only critical for facilitating groundbreaking discoveries; it is essential for building our scientific workforce. For the United States to remain the world leader in biomedical research, Congress must continue to provide funding to fuel discoveries as well as the economy. Neuroscientists use a wide range of experimental, animal, and human models not used elsewhere in the research pipeline. These opportunities create discoveries – sometimes unexpected discoveries – expanding knowledge of biological processes. This level of discovery reveals new targets for research to treat all kinds of brain disorders affecting millions of people in the United States and beyond.

NIH basic research funding is also a key economic driver of science in the United States through funding universities and research organizations across the country and generates jobs in all states across the nation. According to United for Medical Research, in FY24 NIH funding indirectly supported 407,782 jobs and produced \$94.58 billion in new economic activity nationwide. Federal investments in scientific research fuel the nation's pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical device industries. The private sector leverages NIH-funded scientific discoveries to

improve health outcomes and sustain America's research and development enterprise. Basic science generates the knowledge needed to uncover the mysteries behind human diseases, ultimately leading the private sector to develop new treatments and therapeutics. Importantly, industry rarely funds this early-stage research given the long-term path of basic science and pressure for shorter-term return on investments. Congressional investment in basic science is essential and irreplaceable for development of drugs, biologics, devices, and other treatments for brain-related diseases and disorders as seen in the below example of NIH-funded research.

Scientists Identify Potential Stroke Treatment

NIH funded research has greatly advanced the ability to treat strokes. In a preclinical study at NIH, funded by NINDS, researchers discovered that rodents treated with uric acid had improved long-term outcomes following an acute ischemic stroke. This study and findings have led researchers to believe that uric acid may be a successful add-on treatment for stroke treatments in humans. This study was made possible through NIH funding and shows the potential benefits to the lives of millions of Americans when researchers have access to sustained and robust federal funding.

Support for the BRAIN Initiative

The BRAIN initiative is an example of NIH's success through its development of remarkable technologies for the entire research community enabling discoveries across neuroscience and related scientific disciplines, previously thought to be unimaginable. For more than a decade, research supported by the BRAIN Initiative has led to major breakthroughs – for example, researchers have gained new knowledge of how the brain encodes, stores, and retrieves information. Basic research such as this is critically important to find cures and treatments for diseases and brain disorders. BRAIN is lifting all boats ranging from basic science to disease-focused research in a complex neuroscience research ecosystem involving government, industry, philanthropy, and healthcare systems.

Building on a remarkable decade of innovation and discovery, the BRAIN Initiative is now setting its sights high with large-scale projects to overcome current barriers in knowledge and technology related to human brain science. Continued support and investment in the BRAIN Initiative is essential. Through funding from the 21st Century Cures Act, Congress helped sustain BRAIN's remarkable momentum. However, as 21st Century Cures funds are set to diminish and expire after FY26, it is crucial to ensure sustained and robust funding for the base budget of the BRAIN Institutes and Centers (ICs). SfN appreciates Congress' ongoing investment in the BRAIN Initiative and urges Congress restore BRAIN Initiative funding to at least \$680 million in FY26.

Congress & NIH Must Support Access to Models Necessary for Neuroscience Discovery

SfN urges the Committee to appropriate funding for biomedical research without restriction against the use of animal models. Adequate NIH funding is necessary to advance our understanding of the brain; however, full realization of this funding's promise requires appropriate access to research models, including non-human primates and other animal models. Animal research is highly regulated to ensure the ethical and responsible care and treatment of the animals and SfN and its members are committed to the highest legal and ethical standards. While SfN embraces the goal of the reduction, refinement, and eventual replacement of animal

models in biomedical research, much more research and time is needed before such a goal is attainable. Premature replacement of animal models may delay or prevent the discovery of treatments and cures—not only for neurological diseases like Alzheimer’s disease, addiction, and traumatic brain injury, but also for communicable diseases and countless other conditions. There are currently no viable alternatives available for studying biomedical systems that advance our understanding of the brain and nervous system; or when seeking treatments for diseases and disorders like depression, addiction, epilepsy, neurodevelopmental disorders like autism, neurodegenerative disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorders. SfN urges Congress to work with the NIH to ensure this important and well-regulated research with animal models can continue.

Call for Funding in Regular Order and Stabilization to the Research Enterprise

SfN joins the biomedical research community in supporting an increase in NIH funding to at least \$51.303 billion for existing NIH ICs in FY26. Continued cuts to discretionary spending would have a devastating impact on medical research, especially as the NIH recently caught up to its 2003 level of funding, when accounting for inflation, and would hurt the country’s ability to maintain its international competitiveness in this space. Equally important as providing a reliable increase in funding for biomedical research is ensuring funding is approved in a timely manner. Year-long continuing resolutions have significant consequences on research, including restricting NIH’s ability to fund new grants and to fully fund continuation grants. For some of our members, this means waiting for a final decision to be made on funding before knowing if their highly scored grant will be realized or operating a lab at a diminished capacity until appropriations are final. These consequences can be particularly devastating for trainees seeking to begin their careers. Reliable funding allows researchers to plan long-term studies, develop technologies, and engage in groundbreaking science without disruption.

In addition, recent federal agency communication and funding freezes, workforce layoffs, agency restructuring, and the breakdown of regular order and processes have left neuroscientists deeply concerned about whether their vital work will continue and what the future of research in the United States looks like. Uncertainties surrounding the research enterprise have led to canceled grants, institutions pausing the admission of new PhD students, and early career scientists considering leaving the field altogether. On top of this, efforts to cap NIH facilities and administration (F&A) grant costs to just 15% would inherently result in diminished research activity and fewer discoveries being made in the United States. F&A costs are an essential component of biomedical research, including construction and upkeep of laboratory facilities and equipment, IT, safety measures and security personnel, and other critical infrastructure and functions. If the NIH F&A reimbursement rate is capped at 15%, research institutions of all sizes would have to downsize their biomedical research programs; they would not have funds to cover the costs of laboratories and expenses currently paid by F&A reimbursement. Thousands of skilled workers would lose their jobs along with a larger number of jobs in their communities due to reduced economic activity, and tragically, some independent biomedical research institutes would be forced to close.

Ensuring federal funding for biomedical research remains uninterrupted is essential to the future of research in the United States. All the positive benefits research provides in this country are negatively impacted by these real time considerations and destabilization efforts. SfN strongly

supports the appropriation of NIH funding in a timely and efficient manner to avoid delays in approving new research grants or reductions in funding for already approved research projects.

SfN thanks the subcommittee for its continued bipartisan support of biomedical research and looks forward to working with you to ensure the United States remains the global leader in neuroscience research and discovery. Collaboration among Congress, the NIH, and the scientific research community has created great benefits for not only the United States but also for people around the globe suffering from brain-related diseases and disorders. On behalf of the Society for Neuroscience, we urge you to continue your strong support of biomedical research.