July 30, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

As organizations dedicated to improving the health of our nation's children through access to the highest quality pediatric care, we write to urge you to prioritize pediatric medical research by providing $51.303 billion in funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill. America's position as a global leader in biomedical innovation, including advancements in pediatrics, has been achieved, in large part, through a bipartisan commitment to supporting steady investments in the NIH. Federal research funding, combined with direct investments from children's hospitals and other research institutions, enables pediatric clinical research teams to identify the underlying causes of pediatric chronic diseases, determine how best to promote optimal child development, and develop safe treatments for children to improve long-term health outcomes. Robust and reliable funding, across the NIH, including a dedicated investment in pediatric medical research, is essential to advancing pediatric health care and the next generation of treatments for medical conditions that impact children.

We continue to call for $51.303 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in FY26, to support pediatric research across institutes into a wide range of medical conditions that impact children, including childhood cancers, rare diseases, mental and behavioral health conditions and many others. Lifesaving and health promoting discoveries for children have been funded across institutes, including the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), and many others. Robust funding of the NIH is crucial to continue forward momentum in developing treatments and therapies designed specifically to address children's health conditions and their unique health care needs.

We support $1.891 billion for NICHD in FY26. For more than 60 years, the NICHD has played an essential role in expanding knowledge about human development, and the health conditions that impact children from birth and throughout their development. The NICHD is the sole institute dedicated to research to improve the health of children, mothers, and their families, including promoting healthy pregnancies, reducing infant deaths, and examining the challenges associated with birth defects, as well as intellectual and developmental disabilities. While it is critical that pediatric research that takes into

account the distinct developmental and physiological needs of children is well integrated across NIH institutes, there is a need for a robustly funded child health institute at NIH to ensure that pediatric researchers have a seat at the table.

Children are not just little adults. As with children's health care broadly, research involving pediatric populations often differs from studies planned around adult participants. Pediatric medical research necessitates special designs and strategies, taking into consideration children's development, unique ethical considerations for children's participation, and extra hurdles to recruiting and enrolling patients. For example, more precautions must be taken to identify effective pediatric interventions to prevent adverse effects from new treatments because children's developing bodies metabolize drugs differently than those of adults. These unique considerations, too often, contribute to under investment in pediatric research, and a lack of inclusion of children in important large-scale studies.

Compared to biomedical research overall, pediatric research is a relatively smaller field with a smaller market size for new treatments and therapies, which has led to limited commercial interest in pediatric conditions. As a result, researchers studying childhood conditions, especially rare diseases, frequently face additional challenges in securing funding. These hurdles can slow the development of new discoveries in pediatric care. Given these additional considerations and barriers, federal support for pediatric medical research, including partnerships with children's hospitals, is particularly crucial to continue advancing children's health.

We urge appropriators to focus on fully funding the NIH, and to avoid making structural or policy changes through the appropriations process that might cause additional uncertainty. There have been many changes proposed to the structure, policies, and procedures of the NIH, including in the President's FY26 budget, that threaten to undermine vital aspects of pediatric research. In addition, recent disruptions to standard NIH processes, including slower grant disbursements and proposed changes to the funding structures of grants, have left many in the pediatric research community concerned about the future of child health research. We ask Congress to solicit input from the pediatric medical research community when considering potential reforms to the NIH and other federal agencies that support medical research, as well as to evaluate the impact of any recent or pending policy changes.

Advancing biomedical research has been a bipartisan appropriations priority. We look forward to the continuation of this bipartisan tradition with greater emphasis on bolstering pediatric medical research.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Pediatric Society
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Children's Hospital Association
Coalition for Pediatric Medical Research
Pediatric Policy Council
Society for Pediatric Research