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• Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition, Inc. •  
Learning Disabilities Association of America • Lupus Foundation of America • March of Dimes • The Myositis Association • National Center for Environmental Health Strategies • National Environmental Health Association • Society for Occupational and Environmental Health • Society for the Study of Reproduction •  
Society for Birth Defects Research & Prevention • Society of Toxicology •  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research •  
West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT)

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March 31, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman, Labor-HHS-ED Subcm.  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member, Labor-HHS-ED Subcm.  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

Thank you for your leadership on biomedical research and public health. As you consider the FY2022 Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies appropriation bill, the undersigned members of the Friends of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) ask you to provide at least \$46.1 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We urge Congress to sustain the innovative biomedical research pipeline that generates prevention strategies, treatments and cures for diseases affecting millions of Americans, including SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19. Included as part of our overall recommendation for the NIH, we ask you to provide **\$875 million for the NIEHS in FY2022.**

The NIEHS plays a unique role within the NIH. It is the leading institute conducting research to prevent human illness and disability by understanding how the environment influences the development and progression of human diseases and illnesses such as cancer, autism, asthma, Parkinson's disease, autoimmune diseases, chemical intolerance or toxicant-induced loss of tolerance, and chemical sensitivities. Researchers funded by NIEHS have highly relevant expertise that will aid our response to COVID-19 and future pandemics through study of mechanisms to protect health care workers facing occupational exposure to SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19, and how environmental exposures such as air pollution impact individual susceptibility to infection and development and severity of COVID-19 disease. The results of NIEHS research provide policymakers with essential, unbiased science to support informed decision-making affecting our health.

The Institute's studies have been instrumental in advancing our new knowledge about the causes of cancer, including the discovery of the first breast cancer susceptibility gene. In 2019, the NIEHS Sister Study found that women who use chemical hair dye and chemical hair straighteners have an increased risk of breast cancer, particularly black women. The study results suggest that chemicals in hair products may play a role in breast carcinogenesis. The Sister Study is a national cohort of 50,000 sisters of women who have had breast cancer.

Children are uniquely vulnerable to harmful substances in their environment. NIEHS research is critical, since children have distinct susceptibility to toxicants due to their ongoing development and physiological and behavioral differences from adults. Today's pediatric health challenges include chronic conditions such as obesity, asthma and neurodevelopmental disorders including learning disabilities, and the impacts of exposure to COVID-19, including whether such exposures increase child and adolescent susceptibility to future illness and learning challenges. Contributions of environmental exposures to childhood cancer is a growing concern. Since 1975, rates of new cases of cancer in young people under the age of 20 have increased by approximately 34%—an increase not explained by improved diagnostic techniques, and too great to be of genetic origin. In considering asthma, the importance of NIEHS research in understanding childhood asthma triggers, and more, is critical, and prevention is illuminated. A recent NIEHS-funded study found fewer new asthma cases after air quality improvements, including reductions in nitrogen dioxide and PM2.5, were made.

Using new imaging techniques, NIEHS-funded researchers recently discovered how environmental exposures including ultraviolet exposure and chemical compounds in paint, plastics and other consumer products can damage human DNA. These changes result in cell death which may lead to cancer, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular and lung disease and Alzheimer's disease.

Since 2010, the NIEHS has been studying the health of the workers and volunteers most directly involved in responding to the Deepwater Horizon Gulf oil spill. Approximately 33,000 people from Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and other areas have participated in the study. The long-term health study will help determine if oil spills and exposure to crude oil and dispersants affect physical and mental health.

The NIEHS is poised to generate many new exciting discoveries about the impact of environmental factors on human health. We therefore ask you to provide \$875 million for the NIEHS in the FY2022 Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation.

Sincerely,

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