

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 27, 2025

Dorothy Fink, M.D.  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Fink,

We write to express our grave concerns about actions that have taken place in recent days that potentially disrupt lifesaving research being conducted and supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Without quick corrective action, the consequences of further disruption could be disastrous for both medical progress in America and our nation's overall standing and competitiveness on the world stage. We therefore urge you to restore full operations at NIH, including by promptly ending the external communications freeze across the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and resuming federal advisory committees, study sections, patient engagement, and travel for staff at NIH.

As you are undoubtedly aware, NIH is the world's preeminent medical research agency and has flourished thanks to longstanding bipartisan support of its mission. Research conducted or supported by NIH has led to extraordinary medical innovations, including new lifesaving treatments for cancer – including childhood cancers – as well as HIV/AIDS and heart disease.<sup>1</sup> 174 NIH or NIH-backed scientists have received the Nobel Prize.<sup>2</sup> NIH's work is crucial to maintaining America's global leadership and ensuring that our country remains the world's engine of medical innovation. The scientific and medical preeminence of NIH is especially important as we face stiff competition from our foreign adversaries in this arena.

Unfortunately, President Trump has already abruptly imposed numerous baffling restrictions on federal agencies, which we understand are sharply disrupting NIH's operations. Following your January 21, 2025 memo entitled "Immediate Pause on Issuing Documents and Public Communications," NIH employees have been required to cancel advisory committee meetings and study sections. Further delay in these meetings leads to delays in the research award process.<sup>3</sup> A training workshop for junior scientists was reportedly halted in the middle of the event.<sup>4</sup> The HHS-wide communications freeze is currently in place through February 1, 2025, and we are deeply troubled by the consequences of any further delays in the NIH research

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R41705>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/nih-almanac/nobel-laureates>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00231-y>; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/01/23/trump-administration-hhs-health-agencies-pause-travel-communications/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.science.org/content/article/trump-hits-nih-devastating-freezes-meetings-travel-communications-and-hiring?utm\\_campaign=Science&utm\\_medium=ownedSocial&utm\\_source=Bluesky](https://www.science.org/content/article/trump-hits-nih-devastating-freezes-meetings-travel-communications-and-hiring?utm_campaign=Science&utm_medium=ownedSocial&utm_source=Bluesky)

award process, trainings, patient outreach and engagement, and other external communications beyond that date. Moreover, NIH and all HHS staff are also being subjected to an indefinite total travel ban, further disrupting the ability of personnel to effectively interact with the broader scientific community.


Finally, while we understand that President Trump's federal hiring freeze is adversely and dramatically affecting the work of all government agencies, we wish to draw particular attention to the harmful consequences the hiring freeze is already having on NIH. The agency has reportedly been forced to rescind existing job offers and pull-down job vacancy announcements.<sup>5</sup> NIH attracts our nation's brightest scientists, physicians, health care providers, and other experts but, with these crippling blows to its mission and without sufficient staff going forward, NIH will be unable to realize its vital mission.

We respectfully urge you to quickly resume normal operations at NIH and put an end to this administrative chaos. Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request.

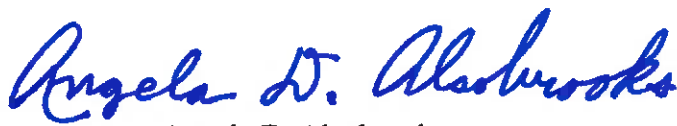
Sincerely,



Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen  
U.S. Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks  
U.S. Senator

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.