

April 6, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

The undersigned organizations, as supporters of the Friends of National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (FNIDCR), respectfully request that as you and your colleagues draft the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation for fiscal year (FY) 2019 that you fund the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at **at least \$39.3 billion**, including funds provided to the agency through the 21st Century Cures Act for targeted initiatives, and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) at **\$492 million**.

NIDCR, founded in 1948 to address shortfalls in military readiness due to recruits' poor oral health, is now the largest institution in the world dedicated exclusively to research to improve dental, oral and craniofacial (skull and face) health. Over the years, the Institute's portfolio has expanded, and oral health researchers' discoveries, innovations and public health initiatives, including fluoride in water, toothpaste and varnish and dental sealants, have led to a precipitous drop in tooth decay among children and resulted in more Americans keeping more of their teeth for longer.¹ Since the 1950s, estimates reveal that the **total federal investment in NIH-funded oral health research has saved the American public at least \$3 for every \$1 invested.**²

¹ Slade, G, Akinkugbe, A, and Sanders, A. Projections of U.S. Edentulism Prevalence Following 5 Decades of Decline. *Journal of Dental Research* 2014 Oct. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4212322/>

² Tooth Decay, NIH Fact Sheets. Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools. <https://report.nih.gov/NIHfactsheets/ViewFactSheet.aspx?csid=129>

This year marks NIDCR's 70th anniversary. Yet, even with the Institute's myriad contributions to citizens' oral and overall health, oral diseases and conditions remain a prevalent and costly part of our society, and troubling disparities still persist. For example, cavities, though largely preventable, remain the most common chronic condition of children (aged 6 to 11) and adolescents (aged 12 to 19), and oral disorders are the seventh greatest health expenditure among U.S. adults. Furthermore, Hispanic and non-Hispanic black children are more likely to suffer from untreated dental caries.³ At a macro level, in 2017 the United States spent more than \$129 billion on dental and oral health care and recent projections suggest that annual U.S. spending on dental care will reach \$192 billion by 2026.⁴

Our society benefits when we capitalize on dental, oral and craniofacial research – both in terms of cost savings and overall well-being – and sufficient federal funding will allow NIDCR to continue addressing the nation's most pressing public health issues in order to create a healthier future. Right now, NIDCR-funded researchers are actively combatting the dual crises of opioid abuse and chronic pain by researching prescription drug decision-making and pain biology and management. The Institute has also made strategic investments in regenerative medicine to replace bone and oral tissues lost or damaged by cancer and other diseases or trauma, as well as investments aimed at eliminating oral health disparities by supporting projects that investigate their social, behavioral and genetic underpinnings. Additionally, NIDCR is fortifying the future of the field by training a diverse workforce that harnesses the talents and potential of the U.S. population.

The funding requested by the Friends of NIDCR for FY 2019 will allow this Institute to support the best science; conduct research that will move us toward precision health care and help overcome health disparities; and ensure a strong health research workforce dedicated to improving dental, oral and craniofacial research. Since its inception through the present, NIDCR has been improving the health of our nation, reducing the societal costs of dental care and providing us with the evidence base needed to improve care. Increasing funding for NIDCR is the optimal way to ensure its life-changing and cost-saving initiatives and innovations continue.

We look forward to working with you to ensure the highest possible funding level for NIDCR is enacted this year. We greatly appreciate your leadership thus far to make this a reality and hope to see your continued support for NIH and NIDCR in FY 2019 spending legislation.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Lindsey Horan at lhoran@aadr.org.

³ *QuickStats*: Prevalence of Untreated Dental Caries in Primary Teeth Among Children Aged 2–8 Years, by Age Group and Race/Hispanic Origin — National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2011–2014. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2017;66:261. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6609a5>

⁴ Cuckler, G., Sisko, A., et al. "National health Expenditure Projections, 2017-26: Despite Uncertainty, Fundamentals Primarily Drive Spending Growth," February 2018, Health Affairs: <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2017.1655>

Sincerely,

Academy of Dentistry International
Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Behcet's Disease Association ((ABDA)
American Dental Association
American Dental Education Association
Dental Trade Alliance
East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine
Eastman Institute for Oral Health, University of Rochester
FACES: The National Craniofacial Association
Fibrous Dysplasia Foundation
Greater Tampa Bay Oral Health Coalition
Harvard School of Dental Medicine
IFAA- International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis
Indiana University School of Dentistry
International Pemphigus and Pemphigoid Foundation
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association
Moebius Syndrome Foundation
National Foundation for Ectodermal Dysplasias
New York University College of Dentistry
Nova Southeastern University College of Dental Medicine
Rutgers University, School of Dental Medicine
School of Dentistry, University of Minnesota
Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation
Stony Brook University School of Dental Medicine
Support For People With Oral And Head And Neck Cancer (SPOHNC)
Texas A&M College of Dentistry
The Ohio State University, College of Dentistry
The Oral Cancer Foundation
The TMJ Association, Ltd.
UMMC School of Dentistry
University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry
University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine
University of Iowa College of Dentistry
University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry
University of Texas School of Dentistry at Houston
University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry
University of Utah School of Dentistry
Western University of Health Sciences College of Dental Medicine