

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 20, 2006

Elias Zerhouni, Director  
National Institutes of Health  
Building 1  
1 Center Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

We are writing to express our concern with the May 2006 report to the Appropriations Committee titled "Basic Behavioral and Social Sciences Research" and the National Institutes of Health's lack of a positive response to the questions raised by Congress and experts in the field regarding the state of basic behavioral science research at NIH.

As you will recall, in March of this year, we wrote to you to express the continued Congressional interest in basic behavioral science research at the NIH. In our letter, we referenced the Fiscal Year 2006 Labor-HHS Appropriations Conference report urging the initiation of structural changes to provide an organizational home for basic behavioral research.

Our letter also referenced the recommendations of the Working Group of the Director's Advisory Committee that NIH convened specifically to review this issue and to make suggestions for appropriate action. As you know, the Working Group in December 2004 urged that basic behavioral research and training programs be established at NIH within an appropriate institute, such as the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS).


We reviewed your May 2006 report to the Appropriations Committee and were surprised that it did not address the recommendation of the Working Group. We have since asked the members of the Working Group originally convened by NIH to look at that May 2006 report and respond. The Working Group subsequently has issued an analysis (enclosed) that notes that the NIH response is "not consistent with the recommendations contained in our report" and makes the following major points:


- The NIH response overestimates the level of NIH support for behavioral and social science research (BSSR);
- Changes in funding patterns at NIH – in particular, changes at the National Institute of Mental Health – further threaten BSSR funding;
- The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research is not a funding entity; and
- Basic BSSR is critical to the nation's health and welfare; it needs a stable, secure home at NIH.

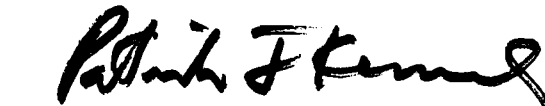
*Dr. Elias Zerhouni*  
*October 20, 2006*  
*Page two*


It is our view that this matter merits additional review. We will look forward to more information about your perspective on the Working Group's recommendations and how they may be incorporated in NIH in the future.

Sincerely,

  
James T. Walsh  
Member of Congress

  
James Leach  
Member of Congress

  
Patrick J. Kennedy  
Member of Congress

  
Brian Baird  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Ralph Regula  
The Honorable David Obey  
Jeremy Berg, Director, National Institute of General Medical Sciences