



SEP 21 2009

The Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services and Education
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6024

Dear Mr. Kennedy:

Thank you for your July 21 letter and for your continued support of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) mission of supporting science to improve the Nation's health. I look forward to working with you to address the many public health challenges we face.

As you noted in your letter, basic behavioral and social sciences research remains an important priority area at the NIH. This is evident in the sustained level of investment to support basic behavioral research that has remained proportionate to the overall NIH budget. As you are aware, the new NIH Basic Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet) program is proceeding. This collaborative program is under the leadership of Drs. Jeremy Berg of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) and Richard Hodes of the National Institute on Aging. The Program, facilitated by the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives through the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), will pursue opportunities for strengthening basic behavioral and social sciences research at the NIH while expanding beyond existing investments in these areas.

I am grateful for your strong support for continuing the existing structure whereby basic behavioral research is conducted across all relevant NIH Institutes or Centers (ICs), rather than in a single IC. Under this existing structure, 25 Institutes and Centers and the Common Fund provided support for this research in Fiscal Year 2008.

You have expressed particular interest in a potential leadership role for NIGMS in the basic behavioral and social sciences. The NIGMS maintains a significant portfolio of research focused on basic mechanisms of behavior in animal models and incorporates basic behavioral and social sciences in its Models of Infectious Disease Agent Study program. The NIGMS has taken preliminary steps to expand its support for research on the modeling of social behavior. For example, the NIGMS recently designated this research area as a challenge in the NIH Challenge Grants announcement. The NIGMS also continues to support a successful program, now in its

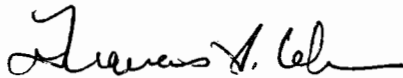
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third year, to train scientists to work at the critical juncture of behavioral and biomedical research. The selection of NIGMS as a co-lead for the OppNet program underscores the important role the Institute plays in the funding of basic behavioral and social sciences research at the NIH.

The scientific leadership provided by the OBSSR for behavioral and social sciences research across all ICs ensures that high quality basic behavioral and social sciences research remains a vital component of the NIH research portfolio. Created by the Congress in 1993 through PL 103-43, the OBSSR was charged with the coordination of NIH-supported behavioral and social sciences research and leadership in the development of new programs. Today, OBSSR continues to guide, coordinate, and reinforce scientific program efforts across the NIH in both basic and applied behavioral research. This approach has proven effective at assuring that basic behavioral and social sciences research is integrated with efforts to address public health challenges that cut across the many disease states and health conditions addressed at the NIH.

I would welcome the opportunity meet with you to discuss these issues in greater detail and look forward to working with you and your Congressional colleagues. I am sending a similar letter to Mr. Baird and Mr. Ryan.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francis S. Collins".

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director