

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2009

Doctor Francis Collins
Director
National Institutes of Health
1 Center Drive, MSC 0148
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Collins:

Congratulations on your appointment as Director of the National Institutes of Health. We look forward to working with you in pursuit of NIH's mission of supporting science focused on improving the Nation's health.

We hope that among your early priorities will be to address an issue of long-standing concern to us: basic behavioral science and its leadership structure at NIH. This area is critical in understanding some of the most pervasive public health problems, from mental disorders, cancer, heart disease, addiction, and others that have behavior as a core factor in their etiology, manifestation, and amelioration.

Along with colleagues in the House and Senate, we have been calling for an improved infrastructure for basic behavioral science for many years. In April of this year, Dr. Raynard Kington, in his capacity as Acting Director, informed the Congress in an appropriations hearing that NIH has begun the process to develop a basic behavioral science blueprint—referred to as the Basic Behavioral Science Opportunity Network, and modeled on previous blueprints for Neuroscience and Obesity. This blueprint will identify strategic research opportunities to be pursued with a dedicated pool of funds. We understand that this initiative is being co-directed and co-chaired by Dr. Jeremy Berg, Director of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, and Dr. Richard Hodes, Director of the National Institute on Aging. We are extremely pleased that this process is underway and believe it will fill a gap in behavioral science at NIH.

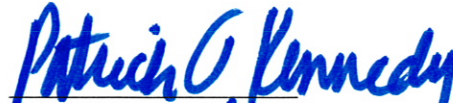
We also strongly support continuing this existing structure whereby basic behavioral research is currently conducted in 18 institutes and centers. However, consistent with all other areas of basic research at NIH that are conducted by multiple institutes and centers, we believe that there should be a point of assigned leadership for this important field of science in an

institute such as NIGMS. We would like to schedule a meeting with you to discuss these important issues, and look forward to working with you as we continue to make progress in these areas.

Sincerely,



BRIAN BAIRD
Member of Congress



PATRICK KENNEDY
Member of Congress



TIM RYAN
Member of Congress