

2023 U.S. House Funding Reports Include Key Language For Behavioral Science

July 13, 2022



The annual funding cycle for the U.S. government is underway. The U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee advanced appropriations funding bills and accompanying reports that include support for behavioral science. Approved bills include the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor-HHS) bill, which funds the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); the Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) bill, which funds the National Science Foundation; and the Department of Defense (DoD) bill, which comes with key language for mental health providers and the Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS), a program supported by APS.

The Labor-HHS bill included an increase to NIH's budget of \$2.5 billion, or a 5.6% increase from 2022 enacted levels. NIH's overall budget would sit at around \$47.5 billion. The bill also included funding for ARPA-H, the high-risk, high-reward research agency that President Biden has touted as a way to advance breakthroughs in health research. While the agency was moved to NIH earlier this year, the report reiterates the stance of Congress that [ARPA-H be a separate agency within the Department of Health and Human Services](#). Lastly, the report included support for the NIH Office of Behavioral and

Social Sciences Research (OBSSR). Including support for no less than 2022's funding levels, the language also commends NIH for convening a working group to look at behavioral science integration across the institutes and "encourages NIH to consider appropriate OBSSR funding levels, resources, and organizational structure to support full implementation of the working group recommendations." [APS was a key advocate for the study](#) and is pleased by the increased focus that Congress has on behavioral science at NIH.

Included in the Labor-HHS bill was an increase in funding for CDC's social determinants of health (SDOH) program. APS supported the President Biden's budget request for the program. The committee approved a \$100 million budget for SDOH, an increase of \$92 million above FY22 enacted levels (although below the \$153 million ask from the president). This increase is significant progress for an important program at CDC. Social determinants continue to affect health and wellbeing, and it is important that programs like this have the resources needed to study and address the issue.

The CJS bill includes a funding increase to the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP), which is a key supporter of graduate-level scientists across all disciplines. The bill provides a \$30 million increase, which puts the GRFP overall budget at \$320 million. The budget increase will allow the GRFP to provide more awards and importantly increases the amount that each fellow receives. Additionally, the report provides language that supports NSF's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences directorate. It recognizes the importance of research supported by this directorate and encourages continued funding for these programs at NSF.

Lastly, the DoD bill includes key language in support of PCSAS and the revision of regulations to include its graduates. PCSAS seeks to integrate the science and research of psychology into clinical training programs and to practice and disseminate the most effective treatments for mental health. APS is a supporter of the PCSAS program and methods. Through adoption of this language, DoD will be able to employ the necessary number of qualified clinical psychological scientists to ensure that military members and their families have access to the highest quality care. An increased number of schools are adopting PCSAS accreditation into their clinical programs, making it vital that the top government bodies recognize this rapid change.

The Senate will hopefully approve its version of the FY 2023 spending bills later this year, and the House and Senate will need to agree on spending levels and other budget details before the package goes to President Biden's desk to be signed into law. This year also marks the retirement of key appropriators in Congress. APS thanks these appropriators for all their hard work and dedication to these issues.

These developments are a welcome sign for psychological scientists. These funding increases and report language indicate continued interest for government programs that fund psychological scientists. Through increased budgets to programs such as the GRFP, or agency components that support behavioral science such as SBE and OBSSR, the government can fund more research projects and provide additional grants to psychological science researchers. APS has touched on psychological scientists who have received government funding in the [Inside Grants column](#) in past *Observers*. Additionally, the expansion of DoD regulations will mean that those interested in pursuing clinical degrees at PCSAS accredited schools will have the full range of job options available to them.

House of Representatives Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and

Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2023 ([H. Rept. 117-400](#))

Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR).—The Committee includes no less than the fiscal year 2022 enacted level for OBSSR. The Committee commends OBSSR for effectively coordinating and supporting essential basic, clinical, and translational research in the behavioral, social, and population sciences to advance the NIH mission and recognizes the critical role of OBSSR to integrate these sciences throughout the NIH research enterprise via OBSSR's leadership and coordination. The Committee urges NIH to provide an update on OBSSR's activities and progress in the fiscal year 2024 Congressional Justification. The Committee notes that multiple Surgeon General and NASEM reports have concluded that most diseases and health problems facing the Nation have significant behavioral components. Meanwhile, behavioral science issues surrounding the current pandemic, including vaccine hesitancy and health misinformation, have made clear that it is important to better understand healthy behavior and how to improve health communications. The Committee notes the OBSSR's mission to enhance NIH's behavioral sciences research enterprise across all Institutes and Centers, but that its direct authorities to meet its mission are limited. The Committee is pleased that an NIH working group was established to review how better to integrate and realize the benefits of overall health from behavioral research at NIH, and encourages NIH to consider appropriate OBSSR funding levels, resources, and organizational structure to support full implementation of the working group recommendations.

House of Representatives Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2023 ([H. Rept. 117-395](#))

Social, Behavioral, and Economic (SBE) Sciences.—The Committee supports SBE and recognizes the fundamental importance of its research for advancing our understanding of human behavior and its application to a wide range of human systems, including public health, national defense and security, education and learning, and the integration of human and machine. SBE funds over half of our nation's university-based social and behavioral science research but remains the smallest of NSF directorates. The Committee believes this research provides an evidence-based understanding of the human condition, resulting in more-informed policymaking and better-informed spending on a full range of national issues. The Committee encourages NSF to continue its support of these programs.

Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2023 ([H. Rept. 117-388](#))

Mental Health Professionals and Training.—The Committee remains concerned about the shortage of current and prospective mental health care professionals for servicemembers and their families, including social workers, clinical psychologists, and psychiatrists. To address the shortage across the military health system, the Committee urges the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, along with the Director of the Defense Health Agency and Services' Surgeons General, to review the tools available to the Department to increase the number of mental health professionals it educates, trains, and hires. This review should consider how the Health Professions Scholarship Program and programming through Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences could be expanded to increase the number of mental health-related scholarships granted with the goal of increasing the pipeline of mental health providers. Additionally, the Committee encourages the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs to revise regulations regarding employment of clinical psychologists to include those who graduate from programs accredited by the Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System to ensure the Department has full access to qualified clinical psychologists.