



NATIONAL HEALTH COUNCIL

NEWS

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National Health Council, Patient Groups Call for Sustained NIH Funding Levels

WASHINGTON, May 9 — As the U.S. Senate continues its "Health Week," the National Health Council (NHC) and its member patient organizations once again urged legislators to support a five percent increase in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding for FY 2007.

"Saving a little money today makes no sense when the price we pay tomorrow will surely be much higher in terms of lives that could have been saved and the loss of our competitive edge in medical research," said Myrl Weinberg, president, NHC. "Let's continue our investment in NIH and not impede American innovation."

"NIH research is the driving force behind the latest innovations in the treatment of heart disease, stroke and other life-threatening illnesses that afflict millions of Americans," said M. Cass Wheeler, CEO, American Heart Association. "The life expectancy of Americans has increased by several years largely due to a reduction in heart disease deaths. If we ever hope to cure cardiovascular diseases, we must strengthen our commitment to medical research funding and help Americans live longer, more productive lives."

"For the millions affected by rare diseases such as Alpha-1, NIH is the best and only hope for treatment and ultimately a cure," said John Walsh, NHC board chair and Alpha-1 Foundation president and CEO. "We cannot afford to lose this momentum at the expense of those whose quality of life — and even survival — depend on this crucial research."

With a five percent increase in NIH funding, NHC and its member organizations said lawmakers would ensure continuity in research efforts by allowing the agency to keep pace with inflation. The groups also noted that NIH breakthroughs have an important impact on the economy by spawning new industries and creating jobs.

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The National Health Council is a private, nonprofit organization of 115 national health-related organizations working to bring quality health care to all people. Its core membership includes 50 of the nation's leading voluntary health agencies representing approximately 100 million people with chronic diseases and/or disabilities. Other Council members include professional and membership associations, nonprofit organizations with an interest in health, and major pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. The Council serves as a place for diverse health-related groups to build consensus with a focus on patients and their needs.

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