

FRIENDS OF ORWH

*NIH Office of Research
on Women's Health*

April X, 2025

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito Ranking
Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Aderholt and Baldwin and Ranking Members DeLauro and Capito:

The undersigned organizations, representing members of the Friends of the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) coalition, urge you to ensure that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the NIH ORWH are sufficiently funded as part of the fiscal year (FY) 2026 appropriations process. The Friends is a coalition of more than 50 organizations representing researchers, clinicians, patients, and policy advocates that are committed to elevating the mission of ORWH to address biological sex differences in health and prioritize research gaps to advance women's health.

Investing in the NIH and ORWH ensures that critical research on sex differences in health is adequately supported. Together, their work advances scientific knowledge and improves health outcomes for women across the lifespan, which is especially important considering that women's health research has historically been under-researched and under-funded. Specifically, we strongly urge appropriators to allocate no less than **\$51.303 billion for the NIH** and at least **\$83.363 million in base funding for the ORWH** to safeguard the biomedical research enterprise. These requests are consistent with the broader scientific community's request and represent a 9% increase over FY 2024 funding levels. While we recognize this is a difficult fiscal environment, funding for the NIH has not kept pace with inflation, and funding increases will best position these entities to be able to fulfill their respective missions.

Investment in health research has never been more necessary, and the integrity of this sector and scientific inquiry at large must be preserved and continuously supported to tackle emerging health challenges. Strong investment in the NIH promotes the advancement of public health and ensures that America remains at the forefront of groundbreaking scientific discoveries. The positive impact of investing in biomedical research is particularly evident in women's health research, where NIH investment has been transformative.

The ORWH collaborates closely with other NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices (ICOs) to advance the prioritization of women's health across research portfolios and ensure the inclusion of women in research populations, making sure that research studies look like the populations they intend to serve. ORWH ensures that sex differences are incorporated into research, helps set research priorities, and leads core programs such as the Specialized Centers of Research Excellence (SCORE) and the Implementing a Maternal Health and Pregnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone (IMPROVE) Initiative. ORWH serves a unique function within NIH and our broader research enterprise by advocating for, coordinating, and integrating research specifically on women's health and sex-based differences and ensuring that these issues are not sidelined in the broader scientific community. ORWH must continue to be supported at the federal level, and it should maintain the authorities Congress has provided it during previous appropriations cycles.

ORWH has proven itself as a key driver of progress in women's health across a variety of disease and condition areas. In 2024 alone, ORWH:

- **Launched [DiscoverWHR](#)**, the first phase of an online discovery resource for women's health research, in collaboration with the National Library of Medicine.
- **Published the [NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Women's Health Research \(2024-2028\)](#)**, outlining five key goals aimed at advancing the understanding of women's health by considering biological, behavioral, social, and environmental factors. These goals include supporting the basic and translational study of the biology underlying sex influences, improving data science for effective prevention and treatment, promoting career development for women scientists, and fostering community-engaged science. The plan provides a strategic framework for addressing the complex factors influencing women's health and ensuring long-term progress in research and health outcomes.
- **Continued critical work through its Office of Autoimmune Disease Research (ORWH-OADR)**, which is leading advancements in our nation's federal research response to autoimmune diseases and conditions, of which an estimated 80% of the patients diagnosed are women. In July 2024, OADR-ORWH published "[Coordination and Collaboration to Support Exposome Research in Autoimmune Diseases](#)" in *Arthritis Care & Research*. In collaboration with other ICs, OADR also announced recipients of the [EXposome in Autoimmune Diseases PLANning \(EXACT-PLAN\) Awards](#), whereby awardees will help establish the EXACT Initiative, a collaborative network focused on understanding the role of the exposome in autoimmune diseases. This resource helps researchers, health

care providers, patients, caregivers, and the public easily find the latest NIH-funded research on women's health.

- **Hosted 12 Specialized Centers of Research Excellence (SCORE) programs across the United States**, which conduct critical translational research exploring the role of biological sex differences in various health conditions and pilot funding, training, and education. SCORE is the only NIH-supported centers program dedicated to disease-agnostic research on sex differences, specifically addressing major medical conditions that affect women in the United States.
- **Supported career development for early career investigators across 19 of the nation's top universities and research institutions through the Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) program.** Through this program, scholars receive top-tier training, mentoring, and opportunities that enable them to develop independent research programs – including in basic science, translational, clinical, and epidemiological research – and to develop an impactful career in women's health research.
- **Collaborated on a [day-long workshop](#) focused on the impact of diet on mucosal immunity and immune-mediated digestive diseases.** Women's immune systems are also often more sensitive to environmental factors, including nutrition, making it crucial to explore how early dietary exposures affect mucosal immunity—the body's first line of defense against infections and diseases. This knowledge is essential for developing targeted interventions that can better support women's health.

Without ORWH, the absence of a dedicated institutional voice and driver of women's health progress is at risk. Losing such an entity or failing to fund it at sufficient levels will inevitably stifle progress in addressing women's health challenges and create significant disparities in biomedical research and health care outcomes. **Investing in the NIH and ORWH is one of the most beneficial and cost-effective investments our government can make.**

The Friends of ORWH looks forward to working with you to ensure sufficient and necessary support for federal medical research agencies in FY 2026. Please reach out to SWHR Chief Advocacy Officer Lindsey Miltenberger at lindsey@swhr.org with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,