

March 10, 2020



The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

The undersigned organizations, representing the Friends of National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (FNIDCR), respectfully request that as you work with your colleagues to draft fiscal year (FY) 2021 funding legislation you fund the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)** at \$44.7 billion and the **National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR)** at \$512 million.

We are grateful to Congress for prioritizing NIH research over the past several years by providing steady and meaningful funding increases. NIH's research, programs and networks are among the most valuable investments made on behalf of the American people, and these sustained investments continue to yield tremendous scientific opportunity across the federal research enterprise. Moving into FY 2021, we must capitalize on this momentum.

Investments in NIDCR continue to make great returns. As the largest institution dedicated exclusively to research to improve dental, oral, and craniofacial (skull and face) health, NIDCR is leading to "a world where dental, oral and craniofacial health and disease are understood in the context of the whole body,"¹—an aim outlined in NIDCR's 2030 strategic visioning initiative.

NIDCR-funded researchers are contributing to the knowledge base on pain biology and management, including non-opioid treatments for pain; salivary diagnostics; and the social, behavioral, and genetic underpinnings of oral health disparities. NIDCR is also enhancing knowledge and improving public health across research areas including:

Regenerative medicine. NIDCR is a pioneer in regenerative medicine. Not only does the Institute support research into regenerative medicine, such as in autotherapies (treatments that take advantage of the body's own ability to repair and regenerate damaged or diseased tissues), but it also serves as the lead NIH Institute on the National Academy of Medicine Forum and

¹ <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/research/research-priorities-nidcr-2030>

launched the multidisciplinary Dental, Oral and Craniofacial Tissue Regeneration Consortium (DOCTR-C) to translate regeneration research advances into treatments.

The oral health effect of e-cigarettes. Over the past several years, e-cigarettes have become popular devices among both youth and adults. However, the research on e-cigarettes' effects on individual and population health is still in its early phases. NIDCR's initial research into the oral effects of e-cigarettes suggest that—despite being less harmful than cigarettes—they may have negative health effects, such as increasing the risk of developing oral cancer.²

The oral microbiome. NIDCR has been at the forefront of research into the microbiome—the genetic material of all microbes, including bacteria, viruses and fungi—and of encouraging collaborations across research disciplines. This encouragement led to a partnership between biomedical researchers and engineers to build microscopic nanorobots to target and destroy dental plaque—a technology that could be used to prevent cavities and periodontal (gum) disease.

While Congress' continued support for NIDCR has allowed the Institute to expand its research into these areas and beyond, NIDCR's funding has not kept pace with the increases provided to NIH. The \$512 million requested for FY 2021 would bring funding into alignment with the overall NIH request and allow NIDCR to build on its success to continue advancing the health of our nation.

This coming fiscal year represents a unique opportunity to highlight the contributions of dental, oral and craniofacial research with the forthcoming release of the U.S. Surgeon General's 2020 Report on Oral Health, a much-needed update to the seminal "Oral Health in America" report from 2000. NIDCR is the lead federal agency working with the Surgeon General to produce the report, which will document the progress in oral health since 2000 and convey a vision for the future, including identifying challenges and opportunities for research. The 2000 report shifted perspectives by showing that oral health goes beyond healthy teeth and gums and that it is essential to our health and well-being. We believe the 2020 report can have a similar impact.

We greatly appreciate your leadership to ensure the highest possible funding at NIH and NIDCR, and we urge you to continue making funding for this research a priority in final FY 2021 spending legislation. If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Lindsey Horan at lhoran@aadr.org.

Sincerely,

A.T. Still University Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health
Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Behcet's Disease Association (ABDA)
American Chronic Pain Association
American Dental Association
American Dental Education Association
Ear Community, Inc.
Fibrous Dysplasia Foundation
Greater Tampa Bay Oral Health Coalition

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30744164>

Harvard School of Dental Medicine
Indiana University School of Dentistry
International Pemphigus Pemphigoid Foundation
Loma Linda University School of Dentistry
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Lymphangiomatosis & Gorham's Disease Alliance
National Foundation for Ectodermal Dysplasias
New York University College of Dentistry
Procter & Gamble Company
Roseman University of Health Sciences College of Dental Medicine
Rutgers University - School of Dental Medicine
Sjögren's Foundation
Texas A&M University
The TMJ Association
UCSF School of Dentistry
UNC Adams School of Dentistry
University of Florida College of Dentistry
University of Iowa
University of Minnesota School of Dentistry
University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Dentistry
University of Rochester's Institute of Oral Health
University of Texas School of Dentistry at Houston
University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry
Western University of Health Sciences College of Dental Medicine

Cc: House Appropriations Committee
Senate Appropriations Committee