

March 31, 2025

Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr,
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We the undersigned organizations and individuals write to express our fundamental concern that cuts to the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) staff at the NIH, planned prior to your confirmation, run counter to the promise of a healthier America. We call upon you to reverse these layoffs and other reductions in force (RIFs) immediately and return these highly regarded public servants back to their vital work. We note the [temporary restraining order handed down recently by the U.S. District Court for the State of Maryland](#) found claims that the dismissal of employees for performance or other individualized reasons were without merit.

[In 2022, more than 57 million Americans were age 65 or older. This number will rise to an estimated 85.7 million in 2050.](#) representing a demographic shift that will have profound social, economic, and health impacts on our nation for many decades to come. The NIA and NINDS lead the federal government in conducting and supporting research on aging and the health and well-being of older adults, specifically regarding work to prevent, diagnose, and treat Alzheimer's disease and related forms of dementia.

Already, the NIA has lost at least 115 new employees, or 17% of its total workforce. Despite the lack of transparency, we understand another 60 to 70 employees were dismissed at NINDS. Layoffs and RIFs include several of the most prominent and distinguished program directors and experts in aging research, dismissed for their probationary status. As you know, this status primarily indicates they were recently hired or promoted. These personnel were recruited or promoted pursuant to robust bi-partisan support from Congress over the past decade. These adverse personnel actions not only drive down morale of the current workforce, but they also undoubtedly have a chilling effect on the ability of NIA and NINDS to recruit the best and brightest scientists into public service in the future. We are further concerned about reports of structural changes within NIA and NINDS which may delay or sidetrack grant approvals, already tied up by the current freeze on scheduling required study section and public advisory committee meetings.

We draw particular attention to the devastating impact these losses will have on the highly promising progress of NIA and NINDS research on Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. Approximately one-tenth of the workers have now been let go at NIH's Roy Blunt Center for Alzheimer's and Related Dementias (CARD), including the incoming director, who cannot easily be replaced. The CARD Center is a collaborative NIA-NINDS program that supports basic, translational, and clinical research on Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, and related neurodegenerative conditions. Its name honors former Senator Roy Blunt of Missouri, a Republican champion who spoke glowingly about CARD's potential to advance human progress when its opening was announced in 2022.

Also of concern is the recent announcement that NIH will consolidate all initial peer review within the Center for Scientific Review (CSR), with [reports](#) that as many as 300 Scientific Review Officer (SRO) positions within the NIH could be eliminated. While the stated goal to reduce bias and increase efficiency sounds laudable, NIH already adheres to strict policies to reduce bias, and SROs within individual institutes bring a different level of expertise than those in the CSR to many of the more complex or long-range proposals. This move unfortunately comes at a time when peer review is significantly backlogged owing to an early freeze on required scientific review and Advisory Council meetings.

The halt to study sections and NIH Advisory Council meetings also have caused funding to be stopped for 14 of the 35 NIH-funded Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers (ADRCs). Established in 1984 as NIH Centers of Excellence, the 37 ADRCs across the United States conduct research and translate scientific advances into improved diagnosis and care for people living with Alzheimer's and related diseases. The ADRC program has supported access for people all across our country to over 325 clinical trials and provided evaluations and diagnoses for nearly 30,000 individuals living with dementia or mild cognitive impairment. Areas of investigation at the ADRCs range from the basic mechanisms of disease to managing symptoms and helping families cope with the effects of dementia.

As you may know, the NIA and NINDS partner to lead investment in geroscience research, a field targeting the molecular changes of aging to develop interventions that prevent, or delay diseases and functional decline associated with growing older. The NIA and NINDS support a wide range of studies through the Translational Geroscience Network, which works across 21 NIH institutes and centers, to fund intervention trials for cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis, arthritis, cancer, and pain.

Millions of aging Americans and their families are counting on you to ensure the continued progress at NIA and NINDS. We hope to work with you and your leadership team to reverse these cuts, restore required meetings, and put our heads together on policies that will achieve the aims of the American people.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research

Alliance for Patient Access

Alliance for Retired Americans

Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center,
Inc.

Alzheimer's Los Angeles

Alzheimer's New Jersey

Alzheimer's Orange County

Alzheimer's San Diego

American Academy of Neurology

American Academy of Neurology

American Association for Geriatric
Psychiatry

American Geriatrics Society

American Society on Aging

Association of Population Centers

Benjamin Rose

BrightFocus Foundation

CaringKind, The Heart of Alzheimer's
Caregiving

Center to Advance Palliative Care

Cure Alzheimer's Fund

Friends of the National Institute on Aging

Gerontological Society of America

Global Coalition on Aging Alliance for
Health Innovation

HealthyWomen

Huntington's Disease Society of America

Justice in Aging

Lewy Body Dementia Resource Center

National Association of Social Workers
(NASW)

National Committee to Preserve Social
Security and Medicare

National Hartford Center of
Gerontological Nursing

Population Association of America

Positrigo, Inc.

PrognosUs

RetireSafe

Synthesys Brain Health

The Brain Donor Project

The Latino Alzheimer's and Memory
Disorders Alliance

Tourette Association of America

Voices of Alzheimer's

INDIVIDUAL SIGNATORIES AND RESEARCHERS*

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Rep. Rosa DeLauro, Ranking, House Committee on Appropriations

Rep. Robert Aderholt, Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education

Senator Susan Collins, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Senator Patty Murray, Ranking, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education

Senator Tammy Baldwin, Ranking, Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education