

AACR Calls on Congress to Summarily Reject the President's FY2026 Budget Proposal for NIH

The proposed 2026 budget includes devastating cuts to lifesaving research, says the American Association for Cancer Research.

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PHILADELPHIA — The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) is calling on Congress to stand up in unified opposition to the President's FY2026 budget proposal for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and to instead allocate a robust funding increase to \$51.3 billion for the agency that is broadly recognized as the “crown jewel” of the federal government for its efforts to accelerate progress for patients with cancer and the hundreds of other diseases that afflict millions of Americans.

“Over the past decade, we have seen a groundswell of bipartisan support for NIH on Capitol Hill, and this commitment among members of Congress has been absolutely essential to ensuring that the resources are available to make further strides toward defeating cancer and the many other human diseases that afflict so many Americans,” said AACR President Lillian L. Siu, MD, FAACR, director of the Phase I Clinical Trials Program, codirector of the Bras Family Drug Development Program, and BMO Chair in Precision Genomics at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, University Health Network. “Therefore, we are laser-focused on working collaboratively with leaders in both parties and across all branches of government to ensure that medical research for public health continues to be a national priority. To this end, we are 100% in alignment with Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Susan Collins (R-Maine) when she stated during her opening remarks at last week's bipartisan Senate hearing, titled ‘Biomedical Research: Keeping America's Edge in Innovation,’ that ‘Proposed funding cuts, the firing of essential federal scientists, and policy uncertainties threaten to undermine the foundation for our nation's global leadership.’”

The President's FY2026 budget proposal for NIH that was released last Friday would slash funding for NIH by \$17.97 billion, a nearly 40% cut. This proposal would also consolidate the agency's 27 institutes into eight. While efficiencies at NIH can be made through various strategies, including streamlining peer review processes and centralizing certain reviews of grant applications within the Center for Scientific Review (CSR), the President's budget proposal would have serious negative consequences and would destabilize our nation's medical research enterprise in all

aspects, including halting critical clinical trials, disrupting the careers of cancer researchers, and jeopardizing patient access to new treatments. Furthermore, the significant cuts that have been proposed will have a detrimental effect on our economy, as federal investments in biomedical research deliver significant measurable returns in economic growth and American competitiveness. In fact, in FY2024, for every \$1 invested in NIH research, there was a return of \$2.56 in terms of economic activity.

“We are at an unprecedented and challenging time in the history of cancer research. For decades, NIH has been the nation’s cornerstone of medical research, driving discoveries that have led to groundbreaking treatments, increased survival rates, and enhanced quality of life for patients,” said AACR Immediate Past President Patricia M. LoRusso, DO, PhD (hc), FAACR, division chief of the early phase clinical trials program, and associate cancer center director of experimental therapeutics at the Yale Cancer Center, Yale School of Medicine. “Therefore, the medical research community is calling upon members of Congress to stop the draconian cuts at NIH and to sustain the very momentum that has brought us to this moment of unparalleled scientific opportunity.”

The stakes have never been greater, which is why AACR is launching a major initiative to take the annual Rally for Medical Research “On the Road.” The leaders of this initiative—which involves nearly 400 organizations from all across the medical research community and represents millions of Americans—will organize local meetings and events with representatives in different states while Congress is in recess to make the case for strengthening federal investments in medical research at NIH.

“Our advocacy for research is rooted in our vital mission to prevent and cure all cancers, not in politics,” said AACR President-Elect Keith T. Flaherty, MD, FAACR, director of clinical cancer research at Mass General Cancer Center, professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, and an associate member of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard. “Because of NIH medical research funding, the public has benefited enormously from advances against many diseases; however, markedly reducing funding at this juncture would halt the work that aims to reach the many patients for whom current treatments are not effective. AACR stands with the entire medical research community and fiercely advocates for our members—especially for all of the young investigators in the cancer workforce for whom the President’s actions are particularly devastating.”

“We are making major strides in preventing and treating cancer, which is the result of decades of dedicated efforts on the part of policymakers, laboratory and translational cancer researchers, physician-scientists, and patient advocates. We must continue to address the ravages of cancer in all its forms,” said AACR Chief Executive Officer Margaret Foti, PhD, MD (hc). “The President’s budget would seriously impede the pace of progress we are making to save the lives of cancer patients. Since the final decision on FY2026 appropriations rests with Congress, we call upon our nation’s policymakers to reject the President’s FY2026 budget and preserve NIH investments in cancer research.”

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