



# Coalition to Protect Research

November 16, 2009

The Honorable Joe Barton  
United States House of Representatives  
2109 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Barton:

The undersigned organizations write to express our continued support for the \$10.4 billion provided to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA/Recovery Act). This unprecedented increase in the NIH's budget has generated tremendous excitement within the scientific community about the scientific possibilities as a result of ARRA. As organizations committed to promoting public health through research, we represent hundreds of thousands of scientists, physicians, health care providers, and patients who support federal investments in basic and applied biomedical and behavioral research.

We also write to underscore our organizations' support for the NIH's peer-review system and the meritorious grants awarded by the agency to fulfill its mission. As noted by NIH director Francis Collins, this research supports "science in pursuit of fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems...and the application of that knowledge to extend healthy life and reduce the burdens of illness and disability." It is the NIH's mission to cultivate new knowledge that will lead to better health for everyone.

Unfortunately, a number of the ARRA-funded grants that address substance use, as well as abuse of, and addiction to, alcohol and illegal drugs, along with breast and prostate cancer research, gender roles and HIV risk, HIV and alcohol risk reduction, and alcohol and firearms have come under scrutiny. The majority of the grants cited were funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). Accordingly, our organizations strongly oppose ill-informed attempts by critics of ARRA to ridicule individual research projects based on cursory reviews of project titles or based on decidedly non-scientific criteria, whether personal opinion or the belief that some populations or diseases are not worthy of examination. Such emotionally or ideologically based criticism threatens the dispassionate interest of science in protecting the public's health.

Substance abuse and addiction take a tremendous toll on American society and their consequences are pervasive and interconnected throughout the world. Drug use is a major factor in crime and delinquency, and in some communities, drug use is the major vector for the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and hepatitis. Beyond the unacceptably high rates of morbidity and mortality wrought by substance use and abuse, drugs and alcohol are frequently implicated in eroding key social foundations of American society, causing family disintegration, loss of employment, failure in school, domestic violence, and child abuse. Moreover, it is estimated that smoking, as well as alcohol and illegal drug use, exact an exorbitant economic toll on our nation, estimated at over \$600 billion annually.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy (2004). *The Economic Costs of Drug Abuse in the United States, 1992-2002*. Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President (Publication No. 207303).

Rehm J, Mathers C, Popova S, Thavorncharoensap M, Teerawattananon Y, Patra J. Global burden of disease and injury and economic cost attributable to alcohol use and alcohol-use disorders. *Lancet*. 2009 Jun 27;373(9682):2223-33. [Table 4]

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Over the past three decades, NIDA-supported research has revolutionized our understanding of addiction as a chronic, relapsing brain disease — knowledge that is helping to correctly identify and establish addiction as a serious public health issue that demands strategic solutions. By supporting research that reveals how drugs affect the brain and behavior and how multiple factors influence drug abuse and its physical and social consequences, NIDA is advancing effective strategies to prevent people from ever using drugs and to treat them when they cannot stop.

Just in the past five years, NIAAA-supported research has reframed our understanding of alcohol dependence. As a result of this research, it is now recognized that: alcohol use and abuse is a developmental disorder that often has its roots in childhood and adolescence; the highest prevalence of alcohol dependence in the U.S. general population occurs in 18-24 year olds; and a large percentage of individuals with alcohol dependence are functional (and some are even leaders in society) and therefore go largely unnoticed by the healthcare system. These findings underscore NIAAA's opportunity to fund research that will facilitate better prediction of individuals at risk for future dependence by understanding the complex interplay between genetic, environmental, and developmental factors.

The recent increase in funding from the Recovery Act will speed the pace of research, and provide stimulating jobs designed to advance the science needed to address these devastating conditions and diseases. NIH has the statutory obligation to rely on the merit-based peer review process to support the highest-quality research across thousands of disorders, including substance use, substance abuse, and alcoholism. Our organizations believe that it is incumbent on the NIH to continue to support all phases of research, from basic molecular biology, genetics and behavior, to community-based and culturally appropriate prevention and intervention strategies. Investment in this research, including that supported by ARRA, will help move us toward a future when substance abuse is viewed and treated in a manner similar to other medical conditions, easing the tremendous suffering that addiction brings to individuals, communities, and our society as a whole.

Again, the undersigned organizations express our continued support for the unprecedented resources and promising opportunities the Recovery Act provided the NIH. These resources have expanded NIH's capacity to fund highly meritorious, peer-reviewed research across the scientific/public health spectrum which will lead to better health for everyone.

Sincerely,

A Brave New Day  
ACOG  
AIDS Action Baltimore  
AIDS Project Los Angeles  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association of Anatomists  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AAP)  
American Brain Coalition  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research  
American Physiological Society  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychosomatic Society

American Social Health Association  
American Sociological Association  
American Society of Human Genetics  
American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
Americans for Medical Progress  
Association for Psychological Science  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI)  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)  
AVAC: Global Advocacy for HIV Prevention  
Betty Ford Center  
BIENESTAR, Southern California  
Bradford Health  
California Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC)  
California Foundation for the Advancement of Addiction Professionals  
Cascade AIDS Project  
Center for Health and Behavior, Syracuse University  
Coalition for the Advancement of Health Through Behavioral and Social Sciences Research  
Coalition to Protect Research  
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)  
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)  
Faces & Voices of Recovery  
Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences  
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology  
FRAXA Research Foundation  
Friends of SAMHSA  
Genetic Alliance  
Genetics Society of America  
Global Justice Ministry of Metropolitan Community Churches  
Hepatitis Foundation International  
HIV Medicine Association  
HIVictorious, Inc.  
International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC & RC)  
Legal Action Center  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association for Children of Alcoholics  
National Association of Drug Court Professionals

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National Association of Medical Minority Educators, Inc. (NAMME)  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP)  
National Coalition for Cancer Research (NCCR)  
National Families in Action  
National Health Council  
National Minority AIDS Council  
National Primate Research Centers (NPRCs)  
Operation PAR, Inc.  
Population Association of America  
PXE International  
San Francisco AIDS Foundation  
Society for Applied Anthropology  
Society for Developmental Biology  
Society for Neuroscience  
Society for Research in Child Development  
Society for Women's Health Research  
State Associations of Addiction Services  
The AIDS Institute  
The AIDS Policy Project, Philadelphia, PA  
The Endocrine Society  
The National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA)  
The Organization for the Study of Sex Differences  
Therapeutic Communities of America  
The Society for Social Work and Research  
The Society for Prevention Research  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Treatment Action Group  
Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute, Oregon Health & Sciences University  
Vanderbilt University  
VGTI Florida Inc.



# Coalition to Protect Research

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The Honorable Greg Walden  
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2352 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
Americans for Medical Progress  
Association for Psychological Science  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
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Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology  
FRAXA Research Foundation  
Friends of SAMHSA  
Genetic Alliance  
Genetics Society of America  
Global Justice Ministry of Metropolitan Community Churches  
Hepatitis Foundation International  
HIV Medicine Association  
HIVictorious, Inc.  
International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC & RC)  
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National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association for Children of Alcoholics  
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PXE International  
San Francisco AIDS Foundation  
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Society for Developmental Biology  
Society for Neuroscience  
Society for Research in Child Development  
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