

April 14, 2025

The Honorable Robert F Kennedy Jr, Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, Director of the National Institutes of Health
1 Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Director Bhattacharya:

The [Coalition for the Life Sciences](http://www.coalitionforlifesciences.org) is a distinguished group of scientists who have been advising government leadership in science for decades. Our members have experience at the highest levels of government, academia, philanthropy, and industry. We are deeply troubled by the damage to U.S. biomedical research caused by the mass termination of HHS staff and NIH grants. Our concern is that these changes will have long-term ramifications for the health of Americans and for U.S. competitiveness from which we may not recover. In this letter, we focus only on the impact of the recent termination of ongoing research projects funded by the NIH, which is compounded by the loss of experienced HHS staff.

The decision to terminate NIH grants that support biomedical research throughout the country leads to tremendous government waste, endangers patients' lives, jeopardizes the nation's future scientific workforce, and diminishes our competitiveness with China and other nations that are investing heavily in science and technology. The unprecedented disruption violates the unique partnership between the government and research institutions that has been the foundation for our flourishing research and development ecosystem for more than 70 years.

We urge you to restore funds for the conduct of these research projects without delay and ensure that ongoing studies are funded until their original completion dates.

We understand that governments change after elections and that each administration recalibrates research priorities. But that does not justify the premature and widespread termination of NIH grants that were selected for funding through a rigorous review of scientific merit and are consistent with priorities highlighted in the strategic plans developed by the NIH institutes. New priorities are incorporated into funding decisions about new grants rather than reversing past decisions on projects already initiated. The abrupt terminations are arbitrary and capricious

because the changes were not subjected to an open process, and they lead to waste of funds and effort.

The disarray caused by the terminations is damaging to the nation for the following reasons:

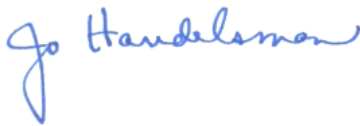
1. **Government waste.** Premature termination of productive, ongoing research projects is wasteful of government resources. The initial period of research often does not produce benefit without the completion of the project. During review of grant proposals, experts consider whether the proposed amount and duration of funding, in their entirety, will produce useful research with findings that will lead to benefits that may improve human health. Premature termination of a project wastes the resources already invested. Moreover, researchers and expert reviewers invest substantial time and effort to determine which research projects among the many submitted should be funded based on their qualities and objectives. Discontinuing projects that are deemed to be in the top 10 to 20 percent of proposals is a further waste of time and effort by the scientists who wrote or reviewed the grants and the NIH personnel who approved the work for funding.
2. **Jeopardizing lives of patients.** Premature termination of clinical trials is particularly troubling because the abrupt cessation of treatment may endanger participants' lives. Clinical trials closely monitor participants' health after an intervention has been administered. In many cases, abrupt cessation of clinical trials leaves patients without recourse if adverse events occur and leaves regulators with inconclusive data about safety and efficacy. Except in cases in which unacceptable patient risk is discovered in the course of the study, premature terminations violate ethical obligations to patients by preventing the delivery of optimal care and by reducing the possibility of gaining new knowledge about medical interventions.
3. **The scientific workforce.** Most NIH-funded research serves as a vehicle for training graduate students and postdoctoral scientists – our future scientific workforce. Abrupt termination disrupts and may even prematurely end their training. Even more devastating is the termination of training grants – grants to universities for educating graduate and postdoctoral students. Premature terminations have created uncertainty about the future of science funding, which has dispirited trainees and caused most graduate training programs to contract. Grant terminations have also caused unemployment among numerous senior staff in scientific research. These staff have spent their lives becoming expert researchers and are among the most highly skilled members of the U.S. workforce. As a result, other countries are recruiting U.S. research staff, students, and faculty to expand their research

enterprises with American-trained talent. The current disruption will have lasting effects by diminishing the strength of the U.S. scientific workforce, which has long been the envy of the world.

4. **Competitiveness with China and other nations.** The disruption caused by premature terminations of NIH-supported research projects is devastating the life sciences engine that has fueled industry, generated new knowledge, and improved the health of Americans for the past 80 years. Many nations, especially China, have long aimed to duplicate our advanced R&D engine by expanding their investments in scientific research and training. China's science and technology research and training has increased 16-fold since 2000, making it a scientific superpower that rivals the United States. We simply cannot afford to forego the knowledge that could be generated by the ongoing research projects and to compromise our global leadership in science and technology, thereby damaging our Nation's economy, health, and prestige.

For these reasons, we urge you to restore funding for these prematurely terminated research projects without delay.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jo Handelsman".

Jo Handelsman, PhD
Chair

Adrienne Hallett
Executive Director

cc: The U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives