

Testimony of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
to the
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor Health and Human Services, and Education

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May 27, 2022

The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, an international nonprofit scientific and educational organization, represents more than 12,000 students, researchers, educators and industry professionals. The ASBMB strongly advocates for strengthening the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce, supporting sustainable funding for the American research enterprise and ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion in STEM.

Almost all ASBMB members who are active researchers or trainees receive funding from federal agencies — such as the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy — to conduct scientific research. It's through this lens that the ASBMB strongly recommends the following:

1. \$49.048 billion for the NIH base budget to continue supporting vital research across the country
2. \$3.25 billion for the National Institute of General Medical Sciences within the NIH
3. \$430.5 million for the NIH to specifically direct toward the Institutional Development Awards (IDeA) program

The NIH's mission — “to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability” — would be impossible to fulfill without the strong, bipartisan support of Congress and this Committee. The U.S. government must continue to invest in science, the people who conduct science and the innovation pipeline at large.

[Basic scientific research](#), also known as bench, preclinical or fundamental research, is curiosity-driven investigation often motivated by a gap in scientific knowledge. Basic scientific research expands the knowledge base for breakthroughs. Solutions, treatments, therapies and cures are built on the foundational discoveries of basic scientific researchers. In addition, [investment in basic scientific research](#) drives long-term economic growth, induces a knowledge spillover effect, increases productivity and encourages more public-private collaboration.

Over half of the NIH's budget is dedicated to funding scientific research—which means increasing the NIH budget is a direct increase for basic scientific research. The ASBMB urges the Committee to ensure that topline appropriations to the NIH go toward its base budget, thereby continuing to support individual researchers and grants. A program level of at least \$49.048 billion for the NIH base budget would represent an increase of \$4.1 billion, or 7.9%, over the comparable FY 2022 funding level.

While we recognize that Congress has allocated a significant amount of emergency funding to the NIH to combat COVID-19, those supplements do not replace consistent, sustained year-over appropriations for the agency. We cannot be of a one-track mind here. We must continue to combat other serious diseases and public health threats as well.

The NIH's ability to remain the leader of scientific discovery and innovation is wholly dependent upon a pool of creative, diverse and highly talented researchers. Research training activities are specifically designed to support and attract that diverse STEM workforce. The National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) provides many [training](#) and [capacity-building](#) programs that attract talent from underrepresented populations in STEM at the undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral and faculty levels. [Studies prove](#) that intentional and personalized direction, exposure, opportunities and guidance support the trajectory and improve retention of underrepresented minorities in STEM.

Congress must allocate at least \$3.25 billion for the NIGMS to continue its vital work in developing a diverse STEM pipeline. This funding level represents a 5% increase over FY22, ensuring NIGMS programs will have near equivalent spending power in FY23.

The NIH [Institutional Development Award \(IDeA\) program](#) builds research capacity in states that have historically had low levels of NIH funding. The program has significantly broadened the geographic distribution of NIH funds for almost three decades. It funds two awards in particular that are vital to establishing fundamental research excellence throughout the nation:

Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE): This award supports outstanding investigators and research facilities in the 23 states where the aggregate success rate for NIH applications historically has been low. COBRE grants are vital to support the next generation of researchers and ensure that under-resourced areas still have access to scientific research opportunities.

IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE): This award facilitates undergraduate participation in mentored research experiences. It allows students, all of whom are at universities in the 23 states noted above and many of whom attend rural universities, to conduct research at better-resourced universities in their states. This contributes to the pipeline of students who will pursue health research careers.

The Rhode Island INBRE illustrates the long-term impact the award can have on a state and the American research enterprise. Rhode Island investigators turned 10 years of INBRE support into 21 awards from NIH and 28 awards from NSF and other funding agencies. Notably, the Rhode Island INBRE has [trained more than 1,500 undergraduates](#) — and 75% of those participants are now pursuing graduate degrees in biomedical fields or working in biomedical careers.

Currently, NIH funds 131 COBRE awards and 19 INBRE awards. We must ensure that the spending power of IDeA programs are protected from inflation and budget adjustments to maintain funding equity across the nation. The ASBMB asks for the Committee's support in allocating \$430.5 million, a 5% increase over FY22, to sustain and invest in the biomedical communities in our rural and under-resourced states.