AIRI Association of Independent Research Institutes ™

Written Testimony for the Record Submitted by the
Association of Independent Research Institutes for the
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Fiscal Year 2027 Funding for the
National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services

May 22, 2026

The Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI) thanks the Subcommittee for its long-standing and bipartisan leadership in support of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). AIRI firmly believes that sustained investment in science and innovation is essential to improving the nation's health, maintain U.S. leadership in medical research, and ensuring competitiveness in today's global information and innovation-based economy. **AIRI urges the Subcommittee to provide NIH with at least $51.3 billion in base funding in fiscal year (FY) 2027**.

In addition**, AIRI supports $1.7 billion in funding to be available through FY 2029 for the Advanced Research Project Agency for Health (ARPA-H).** AIRI continues to be impressed by the progress the agency has made in the last several years and looks forward to the continued growth of the agency as an independent entity within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). As the promise of ARPA-H rests on the foundational research that is supported by NIH's base budget, **AIRI urges the Subcommittee to continue to ensure that any additional funding provided for ARPA-H supplements, and does not supplant, the NIH's base budget funding.**

AIRI commends the Subcommittee for its recognition of the importance of establishing practical cost policies and securing adequate support for research costs, which are essential to sustaining the nation's critical research infrastructure. We urge Congress to build upon efforts to include critical legislation in appropriations bills to protect facilities and administrative (F&A) costs and support a model that sustains the various types of research institutions across the country. **AIRI urges Congress to include language in FY 2027 directing federal agencies to adopt the Financial Accountability in Research (FAIR) Model**, developed by the Joint Associations Group (JAG), as the government-wide framework for determining and reimbursing the legitimate institutional costs associated with federally funded research.

About The Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI)

AIRI is a national organization of more than 80 independent, non-profit research institutes that perform basic and clinical research in the biological, behavioral, and life sciences. AIRI institutes vary in size, with budgets ranging from a few million to hundreds of millions of dollars. Each AIRI member institution is governed by its own independent Board of Directors, which allows our members to focus on discovery-based research while remaining structurally nimble and capable of adjusting their research programs to emerging areas of inquiry. Investigators at independent research institutes consistently exceed the success rates of the overall NIH grantee pool, and they receive nearly ten percent of NIH's peer-reviewed, competitively awarded extramural research project grants.

AIRI member institutes' flexibility and research-only missions provide an environment particularly conducive to creativity and innovation. Independent research institutes possess a unique versatility and culture that encourages them to share expertise, information, and equipment across research institutions, as well as neighboring universities. These collaborative activities help minimize bureaucracy and increase efficiency, allowing for fruitful partnerships in a variety of disciplines and industries.

Stable and Robust NIH Funding is Needed to Advance Biomedical Research Innovation

AIRI appreciates the work of the Subcommittee to protect NIH funding during this fiscally constrained environment. These investments have enabled life-saving biomedical research and strengthened the nation's scientific capacity. Yet the challenges before us—cancer, Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, emerging infectious diseases, chronic illness, addiction, and more—require continued, strategic investment. Continued budget certainty is essential for NIH to predictably fund new and ongoing grants and consider new initiatives necessary to improving human health and ensure that we are prepared to advance the mission of keeping America healthy. To ensure cutting-edge research at independent research institutes is not disrupted, AIRI strongly supports a topline of $51.3 billion for NIH in FY 2027.

AIRI also commends the Subcommittee for its work in safeguarding the nation's health and recognizing the harmful impacts that an abrupt implementation of multi-year funding would have on biomedical research advancements. **AIRI urges the Subcommittee to continue its oversight on NIH enacting multi-year funding, and to encourage the agency to have a deliberate process for increasing multi-year funding, such that it does not disrupt the biomedical research community.**

AIRI is pleased to see the growth of ARPA-H and our member institutes continue to engage with the agency to advance its mission as it grows. ARPA-H has made great strides to address grand challenges in public health that were previously thought to be impossible to solve. However, the promise of ARPA-H depends on a robust foundation of fundamental research. Many of the nation's most pressing health challenges, including cancer, Alzheimer's,

and addiction, still require deeper understanding of basic biological mechanisms. NIH's base budget supports this essential discovery science. AIRI urges the Subcommittee to ensure that basic research discovery funded by the NIH can adequately inform the transformative, applied research promised by ARPA-H. Ensuring strong, predictable NIH funding is the only way to position ARPA-H for long-term success.

Protection of Indirect Costs for Research

The NIH model for conducting biomedical research, which involves supporting scientists at independent research institutes, medical centers, and universities provides an effective approach to making fundamental discoveries in the laboratory that can be translated into medical advances that save lives. AIRI member institutions are private, stand-alone research centers that set their sights on the vast frontiers of medical science. However, AIRI member institutes are especially vulnerable to reductions in the NIH budget, as they do not have other reliable sources of revenue to make up for the shortfall. Due to this reality, AIRI member institutes also face greater risks from proposals to reduce support for F&A costs or investigator salary support on NIH grants.

The nation's investment in NIH has yielded numerous scientific advances that have improved health outcomes and contributed significantly to economic growth nationwide. Proposals to cap F&A costs would cripple the research enterprise and our nation's ability to produce cutting-edge research that saves lives and advances health, and well-being would falter. The Financial Accountability in Research Model was developed by subject matter experts across the research community to show researchers, the government, and taxpayers the transparency of research costs. AIRI urges the Subcommittee to continue rejecting harmful policies that would weaken the research enterprise and adopt the Financial Accountability in Research (FAIR) Model as a consistent, transparent, and evidence-based approach for reimbursing the legitimate institutional costs of federally funded research, thereby strengthening accountability and sustainability of the U.S. research enterprise.

Economic Impact of Biomedical Research

Not only is NIH research essential to advancing health, but it also plays a key economic role in communities nationwide. Each year, NIH awards over 60,000 grants that directly support more than 300,000 researchers at more than 2,500 different institutions in every state and almost every congressional district. In FY 2025, NIH invested $36.58 billion, supported 390,863 jobs nationwide and generated $94.15 billion in new economic activity across the U.S.[1] AIRI member institutes are particularly relevant in this effort to leverage NIH funding to spur economic growth, as they are located across the country, including in many smaller or less-populated states that do not have major academic research institutions. In many of these

[1] NIH's funding information and economic impact data comes from United for Medical Research's 2026 Update on NIH's Role in Sustaining the U.S. Economy, https://www.unitedformedicalresearch.org/annual-economic-report/

regions, independent research institutes are major employers and local economic engines, and they exemplify the positive impact of investing in research and science.

AIRI deeply thanks the Subcommittee for its important work dedicated to ensuring the health of the nation, and we appreciate this opportunity to urge the Subcommittee to continue the success of NIH by **providing $51.3 billion for the NIH's base budget in FY 2027** and **reaffirming that any additional funding for ARPA-H supplements the base budget funding** to strengthen our nation's investment in life-saving medical research.

Founded in 1962, AIRI is an association of independent, not-for-profit biomedical and behavioral research institutes whose mission is to enhance the ability of its members to improve human health and advance knowledge. We accomplish our mission through member networking, education, and involvement in the development of science policy.