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March 6, 2006

Elias Zerhouni, M.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health
1 Center Drive, MSC 0148
Bethesda, Maryland 20892-0001

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

I want to express my great disappointment in your organization's continued inattention to the report language that was included in the Fiscal Year 2006 Conference Agreement on the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, Report 109-337. The language relates to the Congressional interest in creating a structural framework for managing a National Institutes of Health (NIH) basic behavioral research program, primarily in the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS). The language follows:

“The conferees are disappointed that the director of NIH has not yet responded to the recommendations of the ACD working group on research opportunities in the basic behavioral sciences. The conferees urge the director of NIH, in consultation with senior IC leadership and the OBSSR, to develop a structural framework for managing support of NIH basic behavioral science research. This framework should include a division of portfolio and funding responsibility among the affected IC's, and should encourage co-funded trans-Institute research initiatives. The conferees request a report to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees describing the new framework and its relationship to the Office of Portfolio Analysis and Strategic Initiatives by May 1, 2006.”

As you are aware, this is not a new issue. Both the House and Senate have had a series of correspondences with NIH on this matter. There has also been Congressional report language urging appropriate action on this matter at least since Fiscal Year 1999. It has also come to my attention that in December, 2004, the Special Task Force to the Director recommended that a basic behavioral research and training program be established at NIH, within an appropriate institute, such

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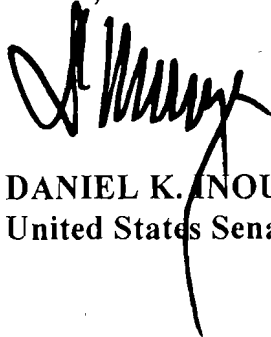
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as NIGMS. Despite the repeated recommendations from the Congress and expert panels, NIH has not initiated a program of basic behavioral research and training.

The Congressional interest in basic behavioral science research at NIH stems from the fact that, in any oversight of health issues, a core finding is that behavior is central to many of our Nation's leading health concerns: heart disease, stroke, lung disease, obesity, AIDS, suicide, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, depression, neurological disorders, alcoholism, violence, accidents, to name a few. Much basic research is needed to effectively address these conditions. NIH has significantly benefited from the Congressional effort to generously double its budget. With one of the largest budgets in history at NIH, I have no doubt that the basic behavioral science research program can be initiated.

As you can tell, there continues to be strong Congressional support for NIH to develop a reasonable process to establish a supportive infrastructure for behavioral research and training at NIGMS. I look forward to your response to these important issues and the conference report language prior to May 1, 2006.

Aloha,



DANIEL K. INOUE
United States Senator

DKI:phdlr

cc: Jeremy Berg, Ph.D.