



## FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING

A broad-based coalition of aging, disease, research, and patient groups supporting the mission of the National Institute on Aging (NIA).

### **Testimony prepared for the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies**

Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, and Members of the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, I am Jennifer Pharaoh, chair of the Friends of the National Institute on Aging (FoNIA). FoNIA is grateful for your continued commitment to the mission of National Institutes of Health (NIH), and, in particular, the research supported and conducted by the National Institute on Aging (NIA). As you prepare the FY 2020 appropriations legislation, we respectfully request at least \$41.6 billion in funding for the NIH. Within this amount, we request that an increase of \$500 million over FY 2019 levels be designated in support of cross-Institute aging research initiatives. In addition, the FoNIA requests an increase of at least \$350 million above the final enacted amount for FY 2019 for AD/ADRD research at the NIH.

The FoNIA is a coalition of more than 50 academic, patient-centered and non-profit research and aging organizations supporting NIA's mission to understand the nature of aging and the aging process, and diseases and conditions associated with growing older in order to extend the healthy, active years of life.

With the unprecedented growth in the nation's aging population, there is a critical need for robust and sustained federal investment in aging research spanning the spectrum of discovery, including research that builds on the basic science of aging as well as translational research and clinical application. The numbers illustrate the need: it is projected that, by 2030, more than 74 million Americans will be 65 or older – more than twice the number in 2000 -- and representing nearly 21 percent of the total U.S. population. In addition, the number of adults age 85 or older is expected to triple between 2010 and 2050.

As growing numbers of Americans live well into their 80s, aging-related diseases and multiple chronic conditions will become an even larger public health concern. Advancing age is the most important risk factor for many serious diseases and conditions including Alzheimer's disease and related forms of dementia (AD/ADRD), diabetes, many types of heart disease, cancers, osteoporosis and kidney failure.

The NIA sponsors and conducts the lion's share of federal aging research that contributes significantly to the improved care and quality of life of older adults. A key NIA priority is to translate research into better and more efficient care through the development of effective interventions that are disseminated to health care providers, patients and caregivers. Transformational tools, including technological innovations, advance the effective prevention,

early detection, diagnosis and treatment of disease that will help reduce the burden of illness for older adults and their families.

Such meaningful increases in NIH funding are essential to advancing research needed to make progress in addressing chronic disease, AD/ADRD, and other diseases and conditions that disproportionately affect older adults. For example, the sustained and robust federal investment in AD/ADRD research, as supported by the Subcommittee in recent years, is making it possible for the NIA to continue with the acceleration of ground-breaking research while building an infrastructure to further expand the NIA's research footprint in the field.

In addition, NIA plays an instrumental role in facilitating and supporting aging-related research undertaken by other Institutes. Several NIA research projects and initiatives are highlighted below:

Health and Retirement Study. The NIA Division of Behavioral and Social Research supports the Health and Retirement Study, the nation's premier source of combined data on health and socioeconomic status of adults over the age of 50. The data is used to calculate life expectancy and the costs of age-related conditions and diseases.

Diagnostics. Intramural researchers at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) developed a new ultrasensitive test to detect tau protein associated with AD and chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). This new test, adapted from a diagnostic test originally developed for prion diseases, could be a major advancement for AD research, diagnostics, and therapy development. The work, published in *Acta Neuropathologica*, was partially supported by the NIA.

Mitochondria and Inflammation. An international team of scientists led by investigators from the NIA Intramural Research Program have narrowed in on a potential new treatment target for Alzheimer's disease involving mitochondria, the powerhouses of the cell.

GeroScience Interest Group. The NIA established of the trans-NIH GeroScience Interest Group (GSIG) to advance initiatives to facilitate discovery on the common risks and mechanisms behind age-related diseases. Most NIH Institutes participate in the GSIG, which has held two summits; a third summit is planned in 2019.

Blood Pressure Control and Mild Cognitive Impairment. In a jointly funded project from several NIH Institutes, the Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial (SPRINT) Memory and Cognition in Decreased Hypertension (SPRINT MIND) trial showed the impact of intensive management of systolic blood pressure on the reduction in the occurrence of mild cognitive impairment for participants in the intensive treatment group. These findings, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, suggest encouraging effects of blood pressure management on cognition.

NIA is at the forefront of discovering and applying scientific advancements to enhance the health of older adults, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability. In fact, to further its work in ensuring representation of older adults in representative research, the NIH implemented a new guideline on the inclusion of individuals across the lifespan. The ongoing efforts to revisit and revise the NIH-wide inclusion policy, as mandated in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act passed in 2016, were discussed in a Viewpoint Essay published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in October 2018.

With millions of older Americans facing the loss of their functional abilities, their independence and their lives to chronic diseases and conditions of aging, the FoNIA respectfully requests your continued support for the vital work of the NIA. The FoNIA looks forward to working with you to secure the necessary resources for the ground-breaking aging research at the NIA, and across other NIH Institutes.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Chair, 2018-19  
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