

March 25, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the scientific and medical communities fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and the billions of potential patients in the United States and around the world, we urge you to lift the restrictions on federally funded research using human fetal tissue immediately.

The world is facing an unprecedented public health threat that, by some estimates, could claim the lives of over a million Americans. While there are promising treatments in development, we will not know whether these treatments are safe and effective for COVID-19 patients until the clinical trials conclude. The full assessment may take months or years to complete. In the meantime, all biomedical research tools should be made immediately available to develop new treatments, vaccines, and cures to save lives and reduce suffering in the response to COVID-19. Fetal tissue has been critical for the development of other vaccines and therapies for viral pathogens, such as HIV, in the past.

Last year's [restrictions](#) on research using human fetal tissue are undermining the ability of NIH researchers to use this crucial biomedical research tool to investigate potential treatments for COVID-19 and other diseases. Similarly, researchers at institutions across the United States cannot access extramural NIH funding for research using fetal tissue to investigate new therapies and vaccines. New funding has been on hold since September, waiting for the establishing of the new ethics advisory board. Patients shouldn't have to wait for NIH funded research on COVID-19 or other diseases to progress. Removing barriers and bureaucratic layers of review is necessary to speed the delivery of new treatments. Unless these restrictions are lifted, Americans may be forced to wait for treatments to be developed in other parts of the world.

The use of human fetal tissue in biomedical research, including in vaccine development, has a lengthy history within the United States. Numerous panels and committees have reviewed the ethical and scientific merits of research using human fetal tissue and they have concluded that it can proceed under legal and ethical frameworks that predated the restrictions on fetal tissue research. Furthermore, these frameworks provide rigorous and appropriate oversight for the collection of this precious resource for research. Additionally, NIH's peer-review process already assesses the scientific and technical merit of each proposal, considering its potential benefits as well as the appropriateness of its research methods. Convening yet another review panel is

redundant and will delay medical research that could lead to new treatments and vaccines for COVID-19 and other diseases.

As organizations representing scientists, clinicians, and patients who are dedicated to improving the health and well-being of all, we urge you to consider the potential of fetal tissue research to accelerate an end to the pandemic, reduce human suffering, and enable the U.S. to respond to future public health threats. With millions at risk of illness, permanent injury, or death, we urge you to immediately lift the unnecessary barriers to research using human fetal tissue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
AIDS Action Baltimore
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
AIDS United
Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of HIV Medicine
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Pediatric Society
American Physiological Society
American Society for Cell Biology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Human Genetics
American Thoracic Society
Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO)
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association of Independent Research Institutes
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
AVAC
Axis Advocacy
Boston University
Brown University
California Institute of Technology
Cascade AIDS Project
Coalition for the Life Sciences
Columbia University Irving Medical Center
Community Education Group
Council on Governmental Relations

Duke University
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
Endocrine Society
Equality North Carolina
Equity Forward
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
Harvard University
HealthHIV
HIV Medicine Association
Housing Works, Inc.
Infectious Diseases Society of America
International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis (AiArthritis)
International Society for Stem Cell Research
IRMA (International Rectal Microbicide Advocates)
Jacobs Institute of Women's Health
Johns Hopkins University
Massachusetts General Hospital
Medical College of Wisconsin
Medical Students for Choice
Michigan State University
NASTAD
National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Women's Health Network
New York Stem Cell Foundation
New York University
NMAC
North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
Oregon Health & Science University
Pediatric Policy Council
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Princeton University
Research!America
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
Society of Family Planning
Stanford University
Stony Brook University
The American Association of Immunologists
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
Treatment Action Group

Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance
Tulane University
UC San Francisco
UCLA
Union of Concerned Scientists
University at Buffalo Jacobs School of Medicine and Biological Sciences
University of California
University of California San Diego
University of California, Davis
University of Chicago Medicine
University of Illinois at Chicago
University of Massachusetts Medical School
University of Michigan
University of Oregon
University of Pittsburgh
University of Rochester
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health
Weill Cornell Medicine
Yale University

CC:

The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
The Honorable Admiral Brett Giroir, MD, Assistant Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
The Honorable Francis Collins, MD, PhD, Director, National Institutes of Health