

September 1, 2016

Francis Collins, MD, PhD
Director
National Institutes of Health
1 Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Director Collins:

The undersigned organizations, representing physicians, basic scientists, clinical researchers, industry, patients, advocates, and other concerned stakeholders committed to biomedical research and the health and wellbeing of our nation's public request that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) update the public on its efforts to implement recommendations from its [2014 Physician-Scientist Workforce](#) Working Group Report. We are concerned by the continued decline in the number of trainees pursuing a career as a physician-scientist and the negative, lasting impact it will have on our biomedical research enterprise and its ability to drive the discovery of new treatments and cures.

Both basic and translational research are needed for the scientific and medical advances that improve and save the lives of patients. Physician-scientists play a unique role in bridging the gap between basic researchers and clinicians, where they help translate research findings into improvements to the practice of medicine and patient outcomes. Recent proposals, including the Cancer Moonshot, the Precision Medicine Initiative (PMI), the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN initiative), and the National Action Plan for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria (CARB) represent new opportunities to address the many health challenges that impact and threaten Americans. It is critical that these and other NIH efforts are supported by a robust physician-scientist workforce to ensure that progress in lifesaving biomedical research remains unimpeded.

Our organizations applaud the NIH's focus on this important issue by publishing its 2014 report on the state of the workforce, along with recommendations to strengthen it in the future. Furthermore, we strongly support the NIH's Physician-Scientist Workforce Implementation Working Group's efforts to implement the report's recommendations. We acknowledge and applaud early progress made by the working group, including increasing salary caps for physician-scientist trainees as well as exploring pilot programs that both improve and shorten research training for physician-scientists.

We commend the recent convening efforts of the Office of Extramural Research. However, we encourage increased focus in these efforts and others which will enhance the physician scientist workforce as many of the report's recommendations remain unimplemented. We recognize that addressing the unique challenges faced by physician-scientists as they fulfill their dual roles of investigator and clinician will require a collaborative effort by stakeholders, the NIH, and other federal agencies. We stand ready to aid the NIH as it refocuses its efforts on physician-scientist training.

We look forward to continuing to work with the NIH to ensure that we support a sustainable and diverse clinical research infrastructure that ensures our patients continue to have access to new advances in medical care.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics
American College of Rheumatology
American Gastroenterological Association
American Medical Association
American Pediatric Society
American Physician Scientists Association
American Society for Investigative Pathology
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Transplantation
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
American Thoracic Society
American Urological Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of Pathology Chairs
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Biotechnology Innovation Organization
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations
Endocrine Society
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Infectious Diseases Society of America
HIV Medicine Association
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society
Pediatric Policy Council
Research!America
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Society for Pediatric Research
Society of Hospital Medicine
UPMC Center for Health Security