



Women First Research Coalition

WFRC Second Quarter 2026 Activities Update

Congressional Women's Health Research Working Group

On June 1, WFRC in partnership with the Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR) hosted a second quarter meeting for staff for members of Congress who lead on women's health issues. The group was joined by Dr. Rebecca Thurston, Associate Dean for Women's Health Research at University of Pittsburgh, who shared about her research on menopause and the important role that federal funding has played in supporting the Study of Women's health Across the Nation (SWAN) study. Dr. Thurston also discussed recent challenges that researchers have been facing due to delayed grant review processes at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Legislative Activities

FY 2027 Outside Witness Testimony Submitted to House and Senate Appropriations

The WFRC submitted outside witness testimony to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees for the fiscal year (FY) 2027 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill. We requested \$51.303 billion, an increase of \$4.1 billion, to the NIH, and \$336,480,000 for the NIH Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH), which includes funding for a new Women's Health Research Fund. We also requested that the committees consider including our report language supporting women's health data science at NIH in the report that accompanies the final FY 2027 Labor-HHS appropriations bill.

Fiscal Year 2027 Appropriations Update

On June 11th, House Appropriations Committee released its FY 2027 Labor-HHS [bill](#) and [report](#), which rejected many of the Trump administration's deepest proposed cuts and restructuring of NIH included in the FY 2027 President's Budget. Notably, the House report included language that caps NIH's use of multi-year funding at FY 2025 levels.

Below are the proposed funding levels for NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs) of interest to WFRC members.

National Institutes of Health - \$47,316,000,000 (an increase of \$100 million above the FY 2026 enacted level)

- Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) - \$111,480,000 (an increase of \$5 million)
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) - \$1,769,078,000 (flat-funded)
- National Cancer Institute (NCI) - \$7,462,159,000 (an increase of \$110 million)
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) - \$913,979,000 (flat-funded)
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) – \$4,013,345,000 (an increase of \$23 million)

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF OBSTETRICIANS AND GYNECOLOGISTS FOUNDATION • AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS & GYNECOLOGISTS • AMERICAN GYNECOLOGICAL & OBSTETRICAL SOCIETY • AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE • AMERICAN UROGYNECOLOGIC SOCIETY • COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY CHAIRS IN OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY • INFECTIOUS DISEASE SOCIETY FOR OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY • NURSE ASSOCIATION OF NURSE PRACTITIONERS IN WOMEN'S HEALTH • NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR ACADEMIC SPECIALISTS IN GENERAL OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY OF FAMILY PLANNING • SOCIETY OF GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE • SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE INVESTIGATION • SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) – \$2,348,721,000 (an increase of \$22 million)
 - National Institute on Aging - \$4,517,623,000 (flat-funded)
- Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) - \$1.5 billion (flat-funded)**

Congressional Hearings

On May 21st, the Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS Subcommittee held a [hearing](#) on the President's FY2027 budget request for the NIH. The hearing underscored overall bipartisan support for biomedical research in order to preserve U.S. leadership in biomedical innovation. Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) emphasized continued investments in opioid research, Alzheimer's disease, and expanding research opportunities in rural states, while Ranking Member Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) criticized grant terminations, workforce reductions, and increased political involvement in NIH funding decisions. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) raised concerns that the proposed 15% cap on indirect research costs would undermine research institutions nationwide, defended continued federal investment in diabetes research, and indicated she would submit additional questions on Alzheimer's disease and women's health research.

Advancing Menopause Care and Women's Midlife Health Act

In May 2026, Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) reintroduced the bipartisan Advancing Menopause Care and Mid-Life Women's Health Act ([S. 4503](#)), legislation that would authorize \$275 million over five years to strengthen federal research, health care workforce training, public education, and coordination on menopause and mid-life women's health. The bill responds to longstanding gaps in menopause research and clinical care by expanding NIH-funded biomedical and translational research, improving provider education, establishing public awareness initiatives and Centers of Excellence, enhancing coordination across HHS and other federal agencies, and requiring reports to Congress on barriers to care and research. The legislation aims to address the needs of the estimated 75 million U.S. women who are in perimenopause, menopause, or post-menopause while advancing evidence-based care and improving health outcomes. The WFRC submitted a statement of support for this bill.

Agency Activities

Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Proposed Rule on Federal Financial Assistance

On May 29th, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a proposed rule that would make sweeping changes to the current government-wide framework that governs grants, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal financial assistance across all federal agencies. A detailed summary/analysis of the proposed changes that CRD Associates has put together can be found [here](#). Many of the proposed changes implement various executive orders and codify existing practices, including:

- Addition of a political review that undermines a peer review process;
- Expansion of the agency authority to terminate grants at any time without adequate due process;
- Restriction of international research collaborations; and
- Limiting the dissemination of federal funded research by restricting grant funds for conferences and publication costs

OMB sought public comment on this proposal through July 13 with a plan to implement the final policy on October 1, 2026, the start of FY 2027. WFRC has submitted a response to OMB to urge the withdrawal of this proposed rule, expressing concerns that these changes would delay scientific progress, disrupt the research workforce, and ultimately harm patient care and public health. WFRC has also provided its members with a customizable template that individual researchers could utilize to submit comments.

NIH Request for Information: Proposal to Cap the Number of Simultaneous Research Project Grants per Principal Investigator

NIH is [seeking](#) public input on the a proposed policy that would cap the number of research project grants (RPGs) an individual can simultaneously serve on as Principal Investigator (PI) or Multi-Principal Investigator (MPI). NIH says that limiting the number of RPGs per PI would have many benefits, including broadening the distribution of funding among different geographic regions and institutions, and supporting more researchers. Comments on the optimal number of RPGs for the cap (2, 3 or 4), pros and cons of the policy, and any unintended consequences of the policy are due August 3. WFRC is seeking comments from its members and plans to submit comments by the deadline.

NIH Request for Information on Measuring and Rewarding Scientific Impact

NIH is [seeking](#) stakeholder input on new ways to measure and incentivize scientific success beyond traditional publication and citation metrics, with a focus on rigor and reproducibility, data and software sharing, training and mentorship, interdisciplinary collaboration, entrepreneurship and translation, foundational basic research, and the broader public impact of federally funded research. Responses are due August 19.

Agency Outreach

Meeting with NIEHS Director

On June 1st, WFRC met with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Director Dr. Kyle Walsh as a follow up to WFRC's initial meeting with Dr. Walsh in February 2026. WFRC and NIEHS reaffirmed shared priorities in women's health research, including reproductive health, infertility, environmental exposures, and workforce development, while highlighting its FY 2027 advocacy goals, such as a \$200 million interdisciplinary women's health research fund and expanded physician-scientist training. Dr. Walsh provided updates on new research initiatives, including programs on endometriosis, uterine fibroids, extreme weather and health, and infertility, as well as potential expansions of its K12 and T32 training programs. The discussion also covered changes to NIH grant funding and review processes. WFRC plans to continue engaging with NIEHS as opportunities arise.

Highlighted Topics & Funding Opportunities from NIH

ORWH has launched two new Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) postdoctoral fellowship opportunities to gain high-impact scientific training while contributing to ORWH's mission and advancing NIH-wide efforts in women's health, data science, and innovative New Approach Methodologies (NAMs). These fellowships will provide structured, immersive training related to NAMs and Data Science within NIH, exposure to cross-cutting scientific and programmatic work, and a deep understanding of emerging areas of research central to ORWH's mission.

- [**New Approach Methodologies \(NAMs\) and Women's Health Postdoctoral Fellowship**](#)
- [**Data Science to Advance Women's Health Research Postdoctoral Fellowship**](#)

Highlighted Topics:

- [Enhancing the IMPROVE-funded Maternal Health Centers of Excellence](#) (Lead ICO: NICHD) Expiration Date: April 7, 2028
- [Advancing the Science of Prenatal Dietary Supplements](#) (Lead ICO: ODS) Expiration Date: May 21, 2028
- [Environmental Contributors to Infertility](#) (Lead ICO: NIEHS) Expiration Date: June 11, 2028
- [Enhancing Data Usage and Utility to Advance Biomedical Research](#) (Lead ICO: NCI) Expiration Date: June 24, 2028
- [Effects of Contraception as Treatment for Gynecologic Disorders](#) (Lead ICO: NICHD) Expiration date: August 29, 2026
- [Advancing Autoimmune Disease Research: Integrating Genetic, Environmental, and Immunological Factors to Improve Diagnosis and Treatment](#) (Lead ICO: ORWH) Expiration date: February 27, 2027

Funding Opportunities:

Leveraging Network Infrastructure to Conduct Innovative Research for Women, Children, Pregnant and Lactating Women, and Persons with Disabilities ([UG3/UH3 - Clinical Trial Optional](#))
Expiration date: November 16, 2027