

**Written Public Testimony of the
Friends of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**

**in support of Fiscal Year 2027 Appropriations
for the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**

**Angela L. Sharpe, MG
Senior Director, Congressional & Federal Relations
American Psychological Association Services**

**Submitted to the United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies**

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Chair Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of robust and sustained funding for the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). **The Friends of NIMH encourages the Subcommittee to continue providing robust funding for NIMH in FY 2027, allowing the Institute to build on its behavioral, biomedical, and social research mission and important initiatives, thereby providing new insights and solutions to benefit your constituents.** We respectfully ask the Subcommittee to provide at least \$51.303 billion to NIH overall in FY 2027, in alignment with the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research's FY 2027 request, and we ask that NIMH receive an increase commensurate with any increase to the topline NIH budget.

The Friends of NIMH is a coalition of more than 35 organizations representing scientists, physicians, health care providers, individuals and families affected by mental illness, and community leaders. Collectively, the members of the Friends of NIMH are dedicated to supporting NIMH's mission to transform our understanding of mental health and the treatment of mental illnesses and conditions through basic behavioral, biomedical, and clinical research. This understanding continues to improve our ability to accelerate prevention, early intervention, recovery, and cures.

We are grateful to the Subcommittee's leadership for its past investments in mental and behavioral health research. In particular, we thank the Subcommittee for its commitment to this important work by providing strong FY 2026 appropriations for NIMH and rejecting the narrative that significant cuts and structural changes to NIMH were warranted.

We share the Administration's concern about the need to address chronic disease in our country. The work of NIMH is pivotal in addressing our nation's most far-reaching chronic disease: mental illness. According to the National Survey of Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 86.6 million adults (over the age of 18) had a mental illness or substance use condition in 2024, representing 33 percent of the country's adult population.¹ Additionally, more than 14.6 million adults lived with a serious mental illness in 2024.²

And as noted by NIMH, mental health is more than the absence of mental illness; mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. A recent study by the National Bureau of Economic Research³ concludes that mental illness alone costs the United States economy \$282 billion annually, or 1.7% of the nation's aggregate consumption. Furthermore, a 2025 report from the McKinsey Health Institute⁴ showed that "scaling cost-effective interventions to prevent, treat, and help people recover from brain health conditions... could avert 267 million disability-adjusted life years globally by 2050." The findings of these two studies alone more than justify the Subcommittee's previous support for the NIMH and demonstrate both the economic and human impact of this research and the need for our continued investment in brain health.

Through its investments, NIMH drives innovation in neuroscience, behavioral science, and clinical interventions. This work has led to breakthroughs in understanding brain function, identifying risk factors, and developing more effective treatments. Because of the co-occurring nature of mental illness and many other chronic health conditions,⁵ this becomes even more critical in the Administration's efforts to address our nation's chronic diseases. The impact of chronic diseases on mental health is a significant concern to the mental and public health communities. The research has shown the bidirectional relationship between mental health conditions and chronic diseases. Additional research is needed to understand this relationship better and identify solutions.

We thank the Subcommittee for its FY 2026 investment in the NIH Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative. We respectfully request that the Subcommittee restore funding for the BRAIN Initiative to \$468 million in FY 2027. The

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2025). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP25-07-007, NSDUH Series H-60). Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-surveydrug-use-and-health/national-releases>

² *Ibid.*

³ Abramson, B., Boerma, J., & Tsyvinski, A. (2024). *Macroeconomics of mental health* (NBER Working Paper No. 32354). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w32354>

⁴ Herbig, B., Coe, E., Enomoto, K., & Saxena, S. (2025, September 22). *The new case for brain health: Scaling interventions for health and economic growth*. McKinsey Health Institute. <https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/the-new-case-for-brain-health-scaling-interventions-for-health-and-economic-growth>

⁵ Huang, Y., Loux, T., Huang, X., & Feng, X. (2023). The relationship between chronic diseases and mental health: A cross-sectional study. *Mental Health and Prevention*, 32, Article 200307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhp.2023.200307>.

BRAIN Initiative is supported by the 21st Century Cures Innovation Fund, and with diminishing resources available from the fund, it is critical that Congress provide robust discretionary appropriations to allow this groundbreaking program to continue making revolutionary advances that improve brain and overall health outcomes. The Initiative is revolutionizing our understanding of the brain and offering hope for the millions of individuals impacted by brain diseases and conditions.

Safeguarding Congressional Authority and Agency Integrity

The Friends of NIMH commends Congress for its bipartisan rejection of proposed funding cuts and program eliminations that would have significantly weakened mental and behavioral health and research. We urge continued oversight of NIH from policies and structural changes implemented without thorough evaluation and meaningful stakeholder input.

Lastly, the Friends of NIMH wish to highlight that according to various reports, NIMH currently faces significant risks in fully executing its appropriated funds due to severe shortages in grant management staff. This situation underscores a critical mismatch between funding levels and workforce capacity, raising concerns among stakeholders about the timely and effective use of taxpayer dollars. It represents a loss of adequate staffing and poses a direct challenge to Congress's constitutional role in directing spending. Without corrective action, the current trajectory raises a credible risk that NIMH will be unable to fully obligate its FY 2026 appropriation.

In closing, Chair Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, and Members of the Subcommittee, the Friends of NIMH respectfully ask you to continue to invest in NIMH as you consider FY 2027 appropriations. To fully address chronic disease as it relates to mental illness and to improve health outcomes for tens of millions of Americans, we need to improve our understanding of the brain. Congress has an opportunity and responsibility to build on existing momentum and ensure that NIMH has the resources needed to meet the scale of the challenge we face in our country. We thank you for your leadership, and we look forward to your consideration of this funding request.