

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