

January 7, 2021

The Honorable Joseph Biden, Jr.
President-Elect
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President-elect Biden,

On behalf of the scientific, medical, and patient communities dedicated to advancing medical knowledge and improving human health, we congratulate you on your election and urge you, upon taking office, to swiftly rescind the human fetal tissue (HFT) research restrictions and policy changes that the Department of Health and Human Services made in 2019. These changes have halted all intramural HFT research and obstructed new extramural research involving HFT. Scientists and ethicists have repeatedly reviewed the use of HFT in research and have consistently concluded that HFT is an essential resource for biomedical research. HFT has led to many scientific and medical advances that have saved millions of lives. It remains critical for the development of new treatments for a wide range of serious diseases, including COVID-19.

We encourage you to immediately revoke the 2019 [Department of Health and Human Services policy](#) that banned intramural NIH research and imposed an additional and unnecessary barrier for extramural research using HFT, and restore the previous process for approving these projects. As a result of the flawed 2019 policy, highly worthy, scientifically meritorious research was not funded, creating a chilling effect on the broader scientific community. The NIH guide notices that implemented the HHS policy ([NOT-OD-19-128](#) and [NOT-OD-19-137](#)) must be revoked to restore the integrity of the peer review process and lift the unnecessary barriers to promising biomedical research using HFT.

Additionally, we encourage you to commission an expert report on the scientific and medical value of HFT research. In 2018 and 2019, many of our organizations provided feedback during the Trump administration review of HFT research. While the details of the review were never publicly released, we are confident that an independent and rigorous evaluation of the scientific and ethical merits of HFT research would find that it will continue to advance scientific research and contribute to the development of new treatments.

Cells derived from HFT are currently being used to support the development of multiple treatments and vaccines for COVID-19. While the Trump Administration's arbitrary restrictions on HFT research did not extend to the particular cell line used in COVID-19 research, this research demonstrates the significance of HFT as a research tool for life-saving biomedical research. The restrictions put in place by the Trump administration could delay future advances, vaccines, and anti-viral therapies that would otherwise have been developed through the current generation of HFT research.

HFT has unique and valuable properties that often cannot be replaced by other cell types. Cells from HFT are more flexible and less specialized than cells from adult tissue and can be more readily grown in culture. This is part of the reason why HFT is used to generate vaccines and to study infectious diseases like COVID-19, Zika, HIV, and other viruses. HFT also remains necessary for ongoing research to understand human development and its impact on disease. It is needed to validate model systems to study the progression of diseases and evaluate new therapeutics. It remains critical for ongoing clinical research on potential treatments for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), spinal cord injury, and Parkinson's disease. While some have argued that advances in recent years have reduced the need for HFT in certain areas of research, it remains crucial for many others.

The longstanding review process for HFT research that was in place prior to the Trump administration ensured that research using HFT was scientifically meritorious, legal, and ethically sound. This ethical and legal framework remains the standard for HFT research and prohibits individuals from profiting from acquiring, receiving, or transferring HFT for research.

As organizations representing scientists, clinicians, and patients driven by a desire to improve the health and well-being of all, we appreciate your commitment to public health, biomedical research, and evidence-based policies. We look forward to working with you and your administration and thank you for considering our views on the significance of research using human fetal tissue.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
AIDS Action Baltimore
AIDS Alabama
AIDS Foundation Chicago
AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition (ATAC)
Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Anatomy
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Brain Coalition
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Pediatric Society
American Society for Cell Biology
American Society for Investigative Pathology
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Human Genetics
American Thoracic Society
Americans for Cures

ASRM

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of American Universities

Association of Independent Research Institutes

Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs

Association of Nurses in AIDS Care

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

AVAC

Axis Advocacy

Boston University

Cascade AIDS Project

Coalition for the Life Sciences

Columbia University Irving Medical Center

Council on Governmental Relations

Duke University School of Medicine

Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation

Equality California

Equality North Carolina

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality

Global Healthy Living Foundation

Harvard University

HealthHIV

HIV Medicine Association

HIV+Aging Research Project-Palm Springs

Housing Works, Inc.

Infectious Diseases Society of America

International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis (AiArthritis)

International Society for Cell & Gene Therapy (ISCT)

International Society for Stem Cell Research

Jacobs Institute of Women's Health

Johns Hopkins University

Medical College of Wisconsin

NASTAD

National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Coalition for LGBT Health

National Working Positive Coalition

New York University

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

Pediatric Policy Council

Prevention Access Campaign

Princeton

Research!America

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Scripps Research

Silver State Equality-Nevada
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
Society of Family Planning
Society of Toxicology
Stanford University
State University of New York
Texans for Cures
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
The New York Stem Cell Foundation
Treatment Action Group
Treatment Education Network (TEN)
Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance
Tulane University
UC San Francisco
UCLA
United States People Living with HIV Caucus
University at Buffalo
University of California San Diego
University of California System
University of California, Irvine (UCI)
University of Chicago Medical Center
University of Illinois College of Medicine
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
UW Medicine
Weill Cornell Medicine
Yale University