

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 6, 2013

The Honorable Francis Collins  
Director  
National Institutes of Health  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Collins:

It has come to our attention that there have been recent discussions about the relevance of economics research within the scope of the mission of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We are writing to affirm our belief that NIH should sustain its crucial support for behavioral and social science research, including economics. Support for these areas of research is consistent with the NIH mission to "enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce the burdens of illness and disability."

As you know, scientific discovery requires support of basic, applied, and translational research across a range of academic disciplines, including the behavioral and social sciences. The underlying causes of diseases and disabilities are complex. Many factors, including genetic, social, biological, environmental, and behavioral, must be understood and unraveled to fully appreciate how these conditions occur and can be prevented and treated effectively across different populations. The social sciences are instrumental to this progress, and researchers from economics, psychology, sociology, demography, history, geography, communications and political science, have all made contributions that build our collective knowledge on the determinants of health and provide the foundation for future policy action.

To date, NIH support of behavioral and social science research has yielded important scientific advances. In particular, the agency's support of economics research has generated a number of findings that address some of the most pressing issues in health research, including how to promote healthy behaviors, stem the onset of chronic conditions, improve the productivity of medical care, and understand how socio-economic factors interact with communities to perpetuate health disparities among population groups. In some instances this research has also generated significant cost savings, such as the NIH funded study which led to changes in the pharmacy benefit system and eliminated \$100 million annual costs without generating adverse health effects.

NIH funded economics research also has global implications. For example, James Heckman, a Nobel Prize winning, NIH-funded economist, demonstrated that early

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interventions in the cognitive and socio-emotional development of disadvantaged children have much higher economic returns than interventions that occur later in life. This research has improved the health of children around the world.

We applaud you for fulfilling your agency's mission by supporting high quality scientific interdisciplinary behavioral and social science research, and encourage you to remain steadfast in your support of social science research. Social sciences, economics in particular, have always been an important pillar of knowledge in our effort to improve national and global health. We thank you for your dedicated efforts and look forward to our ongoing collaborations as we work together to eliminate health disparities and improve the health and well being of every member of this great country.


Sincerely,

  
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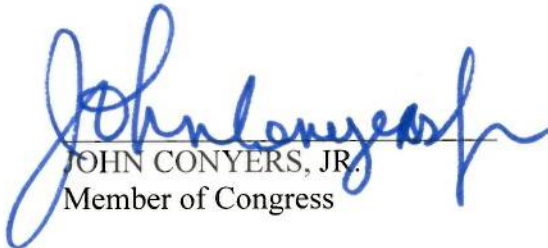
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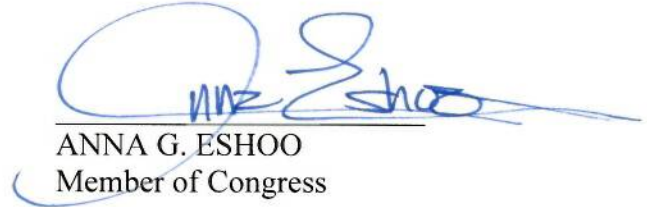
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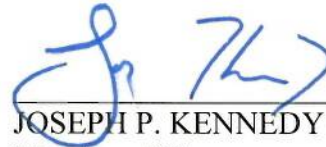
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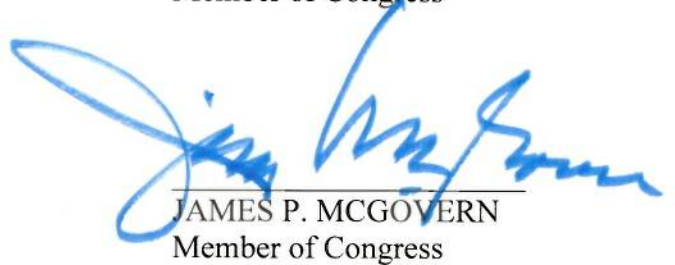
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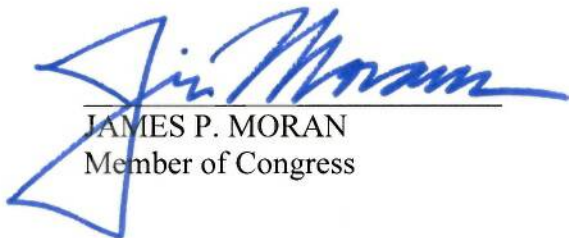
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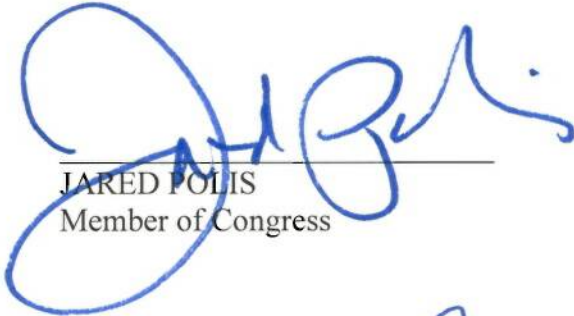


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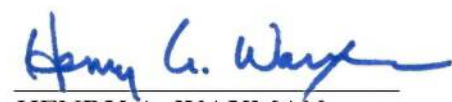
  
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