Testimony Concerning
Appropriations for NIH Cardiovascular Disease Research
Prepared by the National Coalition for Heart and Stroke Research

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

May 22, 2026

Chair Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the 34 member organizations of the National Coalition for Heart and Stroke Research (NCHSR), we respectfully submit this testimony regarding Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 appropriations for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and its critical role in advancing research to combat cardiovascular disease (CVD), including heart disease and stroke. Despite significant progress, cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death worldwide and accounted for 915,973 deaths in the United States in 2023.[1] These sobering statistics underscore the urgent need not only to prioritize cardiovascular health, but also to implement effective, evidence-based solutions to reduce its prevalence. To advance these efforts, our coalition recommends the following funding allocations for FY 2027.

National Institutes of Health – Appropriation of $51.3 Billion

Overall, we recommend **$51.3 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH)** to expand investments in our nation's biomedical research infrastructure and to continue catalyzing groundbreaking research that has transformed our understanding and management of cardiovascular disease. NIH-funded endeavors have unearthed pivotal risk factors for conditions like heart disease and stroke, shedding light on the pernicious impacts of smoking, cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Through rigorous investigations, NIH-backed scientists have pioneered interventions that mitigate these risks, ranging from cholesterol- and blood pressure-lowering medications to lifestyle adjustments such as regular physical activity, nutritious diets, and smoking cessation programs. These scientific breakthroughs have led to a remarkable decline of heart disease deaths by nearly 70% since 1969.[2] However, challenges persist in the cardiovascular health field specifically, with stroke remaining a formidable threat, striking an American every 40 seconds.[3]

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[1] 2026 Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics: A Report of US and Global Data From the American Heart Association https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIR.0000000000001412

[2] Weir HK, Anderson RN, Coleman King SM, Soman A, Thompson TD, Hong Y, et al. Heart Disease and Cancer Deaths — Trends and Projections in the United States, 1969–2020. Prev Chronic Dis 2016;13:160211. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd13.160211

[3] Tsao CW, Aday AW, Almarzooq ZI, Beaton AZ, Bittencourt MS, Boehme AK, et al. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics—2023 Update: A Report From the American Heart Association. Circulation. 2023;147:e93–e621.

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke - Appropriation of $2.86 billion and $468 million for the (BRAIN) Initiative.

Each year, approximately 795,000 Americans experience a stroke[4], the majority of which are ischemic strokes caused by a clot blocking blood flow to the brain. Without prompt restoration of blood flow, these events can result in permanent disability or death. Research supported by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) has transformed not only the emergency treatment of ischemic stroke, but also the broader field of neuroscience across basic, translational, and clinical research. Decades of investment have yielded major advances, including clot-busting therapies such as tissue plasminogen activator (t-PA), mechanical thrombectomy devices, and advanced imaging technologies that enable faster and more accurate diagnosis. Collectively, these innovations have revolutionized stroke care and contributed to meaningful declines in stroke-related mortality through timely and effective treatment.

To sustain this progress and accelerate advances in stroke prevention, treatment, and recovery, we recommend **$2.86 billion in program funding for NINDS**. This funding level reflects the Biomedical Research and Development Price Index, projected at 2.7 percent, along with 5 percent real growth. In addition, we recommend **$468 million** for the Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies **(BRAIN) Initiative**. The BRAIN Initiative is transforming our understanding of the brain and offering new hope for millions of individuals affected by neurological diseases, disorders, and injuries. Without increased investment, flat discretionary funding in FY 2027 would effectively result in a $195 million cut to the initiative, limiting the number of meritorious research proposals that can be funded and slowing critical scientific progress.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute - Appropriation of $4.337 billion

To sustain current activities and investment in promising and critically needed scientific research that will aggressively advance the fight against heart disease and stroke, we recommend **$4.337 billion for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)**. In 2024, scientists at the NHLBI achieved a major breakthrough in understanding how the body clears "bad" cholesterol (LDL) from the blood.[5] For the first time, researchers mapped exactly how LDL binds to its receptor—a critical step in removing cholesterol—and identified where this process breaks down in people with inherited conditions like familial hypercholesterolemia (FH). Using advanced imaging and AI tools, the team pinpointed specific genetic mutations that disrupt this binding, leading to dangerously high cholesterol levels. These insights could pave the way for new, targeted therapies designed to restore or improve LDL clearance. Continued investment in biomedical research is critical to unlocking innovations like this that can save lives and reduce the burden of stroke.

NHLBI also supports a broad portfolio of research aimed at improving cardiovascular health and preventing disease. Ongoing studies are examining how reductions in lead exposure affect blood pressure, as well as how evidence-based dietary interventions, such as the Dietary Approaches to

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[4] 2026 Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics: A Report of US and Global Data From the American Heart Association https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIR.0000000000001412

[5] ADVANCING Heart, Lung, Blood, and Sleep Research. March 2025. NHLBI. https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/resources/advancing-heart-lung-blood-and-sleep-research-march-2025

Stop Hypertension (DASH) and Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC), can improve heart and brain health. These efforts underscore NHLBI's central role in improving the understanding, prevention, and treatment of cardiovascular disease. Additional funding will further support initiatives to reduce maternal mortality and address the disproportionate burden of cardiovascular disease in low-income, rural, and other underserved communities.

Cardiovascular disease—including heart disease and stroke—remains the leading cause of death in the United States and the costliest, imposing a burden of more than $1 billion every day. Without intervention, these costs are projected to exceed $2 trillion annually by 2050.[6] Our recommended investments in the National Institutes of Health will help reverse this trajectory by expanding research, accelerating prevention strategies, and improving patient outcomes—ultimately saving lives and reducing long-term health care costs. We respectfully urge Congress to support cardiovascular research by adopting our recommended funding levels in the FY 2027 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration.

[6] Kazi D, Elkind M, Deutsch A, Dowd W, et al. Forecasting the economic burden of cardiovascular disease and stroke in the United States through 2050: a presidential advisory from the American Heart Association. Circulation. 2024;149:e00–e00. doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000001258