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AADOOCR Strongly Opposes House FY2025 Labor-HHS Spending Bill and NIH Restructuring

Alexandria, VA – The American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research (AADOCR) released the following statement today in response to the subcommittee mark-up of the House Appropriations Committee’s Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS) spending bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025.

Earlier this week, a House committee approved the FY 2025 Labor-HHS bill with drastic funding cuts to federal agencies and programs that are critical to advancing medical research, science, and our public health infrastructure. The committee also brazenly appropriated funds to an unauthorized structure of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that was simply a framework for discussion proposed by House Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) on June 14, 2024.

AADOOCR strongly opposes the proposal to consolidate the NIH’s existing 27 institutes and centers (ICs) into 15 newly renamed ICs. This radical restructuring will dilute the specialized focus that allows each IC to perform targeted and effective research within its area of expertise and would lead to a loss of specialization in the existing areas of health research. Eliminating institutes that have decades of knowledge and specific research agendas for particular diseases or body systems will hinder scientific advancement, delay the approval of research grants, and will lead to adverse health outcomes for the American people.

At a bare minimum, such a vast set of structural and policy reforms to the largest biomedical research agency in the world should follow a traditional legislative process that includes congressional hearings and opportunities for stakeholder input before being integrated into an annual spending bill. Abruptly implementing such dramatic changes in an appropriations bill without first soliciting the expertise of the medical research community is dangerous and would cause major disruption to the nation’s scientific enterprise.

AADOOCR also opposes the overall FY 2025 spending level for HHS, which amounts to a \$8.5 billion cut below the FY24 enacted level. It is completely irresponsible to slash our nation’s investment in these areas at a time when there are ongoing public health crises and as we are losing ground to other nations as a global R&D leader. In particular, we are deeply concerned about the following proposed spending cuts:

- Cutting ARPA-H by \$1 billion and situating the independent research agency within NIH,

- Completely eliminating funding for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ),
- Slashing funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by \$1.8 billion, (22%) and defunding the agency's Tobacco Prevention and Control programs, and
- Cutting the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) by \$647 million (8%) including reductions in funding for Title VII health workforce training programs.

These reckless cuts to critical investments will weaken the nation's public health system and stifle the research and innovation that yields new lifesaving cures and treatments. Congress must provide adequate funding for these programs in FY 2025 to ensure we have a sustainable health care workforce and to protect the health and wellbeing of our nation.

AADOCR will be engaging with Congress over the coming months to ensure our nation's research and health agencies are funded at the highest possible amount in 2025. We are also open to participating in a robust discussion about how to improve and modernize NIH, including the commendable effort to reduce administrative costs and enhance accountability. Radical structural and policy changes, however, must be considered through an open, transparent process that incorporates stakeholder input and must be legislated through an authorizing body, not simply written into an appropriations bill.

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The American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research is a nonprofit organization with a mission to drive dental, oral, and craniofacial research to advance health and well-being. AADOCR represents the individual scientists, clinician-scientists, dental professionals, and students based in academic, government, non-profit and private-sector institutions who share our mission. AADOCR is the largest division of the International Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research. Learn more at www.aadocr.org.