

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 21, 2026

Dr. Jayanta “Jay” Bhattacharya
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Director Bhattacharya,

We write to express our concern with the pace of grant awards at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and to urge you to take immediate action to ensure the timely obligation of all congressionally appropriated FY2026 funds.

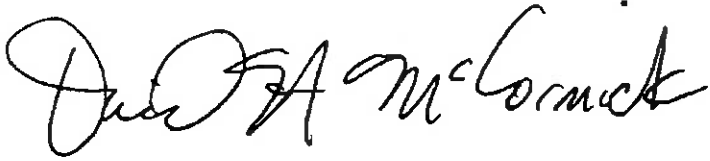
An analysis of NIH RePORTER data, NIH has awarded only approximately 1,900 new and competitive grants between October 2025 and late March 2026, which accounts for less than half the number typically awarded by that point in the fiscal year. The National Cancer Institute has earmarked roughly \$72 million for new and competitive grants through late March, compared to nearly \$250 million at the same point in FY21-24. The slowdown covers most major disease areas, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, and prenatal care. Congress appropriated more than \$47 billion to NIH for FY2026, and that investment must be put to work.

The consequences of this slowdown are already being felt in Pennsylvania. In 2025, NIH-funded research generated \$5.3B in economic activity in the Commonwealth and supported more than 21,700 jobs. NIH-driven commercialization efforts have also helped create 3,710 businesses and 97,000 jobs in the biopharmaceutical industry. Failure to disburse appropriated funds not only forfeits critical investments but also delays scientific breakthroughs and undermines America’s leadership in biomedical research at a time of growing competition from China and other adversaries. In Pennsylvania, world-class research institutions depend on a functioning NIH grant pipeline to sustain their workforce, advance lifesaving discoveries, and drive long-term economic growth.

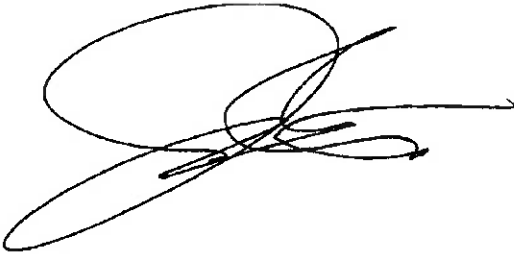
We respectfully request that NIH move expeditiously to obligate all FY2026 appropriated funds in accordance with congressional intent, provide our offices additional context regarding the challenges NIH is facing contributing to the current pace of awards, and set forth actionable steps the agency is taking to address delays.

We hope to continue working together to ensure NIH fulfills its mission of making America healthy and keeping American science first in the world. We appreciate your attention to this matter and hope to receive your response no later than June 21, 2026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David H. McCormick". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

David H. McCormick
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Fetterman". The signature is highly stylized and abstract, featuring several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Fetterman
United States Senator