



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

**FY 2016 Budget Hearing - National Institutes of Health
March 3, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for yielding. Dr. Collins, welcome. I appreciate you being with us today to discuss the Fiscal Year 2016 budget request for the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Collins, I continue to be impressed with you personally and professionally. Your leadership role in the ground-breaking international Human Genome Project is just one example of your many talents. Unquestionably, you are at the helm of NIH during a time that demands our country's interest and investment in medical research.

The recent Ebola epidemic in West Africa highlights the importance of NIH's mission to gain and apply knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability. Medical research is one of the most important parts of preventing future epidemics and developing cures for diseases that are not preventable. The NIH FY 2016 budget request highlights priorities such as Ebola, Alzheimer's disease and Antimicrobial Resistance. In addition to the public health benefits that accompany NIH work, the economic impact of medical research should not be underestimated. NIH research dollars not only impact research facilities and researchers, but they also help get new drugs and devices to market.

I am pleased to see that you have invited Dr. Nora Volkow to join you this morning. As the Director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse, Dr. Volkow has been a true pioneer in the science of drug abuse and addiction. She was one of the first people in history to use brain imaging to investigate the effects and addictive properties of abusable drugs, and her research has undoubtedly made the world that we live in a better place. She has been with us since day one as we've battled drug abuse in Southern and Eastern Kentucky, and I am looking forward to seeing both of you at the Rx Summit in Atlanta this summer.

Dr. Collins, Dr. Volkow – I look forward to hearing from you today about two critical drug-related issues. First, I am pleased that NIDA is pursuing an Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) study to collect rigorous longitudinal data on the effects of marijuana, alcohol, nicotine and other drugs on a young person's brain. It is unfathomable to me that states continue to pursue policies to decriminalize or legalize marijuana – in contravention to federal law, I might add – when we don't have scientific data to tell us about the long-term impacts of marijuana use on the brain. This study will help close that gap, and hopefully bring some much-needed sense to the conversation about marijuana use in this country.

Secondly, Dr. Volkow, I am interested to hear about recent efforts regarding the abuse of prescription medications. As you well know, this has been characterized by your colleagues at the CDC as a national epidemic. I understand that you are partnering with nine major pharmaceutical companies to evaluate the risks associated with the long-term use of opioids for the management of chronic pain. If there are non-opioid alternatives to the treatment of pain, we need to know about them – and doctors need to be educated. I am also hoping that you can provide us with an update on the science of abuse-deterrent medications.

In addition to our long-standing struggles with drug addiction and abuse, the research provided by NIH is critical to understanding, preventing, and developing cures for ailments like diabetes, cancer and heart disease that continue to plague my region. We are very proud of the partnerships we've established with NIH in Kentucky – for example, the Markey Cancer Center, a National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Center, located at the University of Kentucky, and the UK Center for Clinical and Translational Science, which previously received your prestigious Clinical and Translational Science Award for its work to confront chronic health issues in Kentucky and rural populations in the Appalachian region. Currently, 22 of the world's 50 top ranked universities for life sciences are in the United States, and we must continue to foster the next generation of scientists. We look forward to continuing these important collaborative efforts as we work together to bring an end to these devastating diseases.

Dr. Collins, I look forward to hearing your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

#####