

Written Testimony
The Honorable Morgan Luttrell
Member of Congress, Texas 8th District

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Thursday, March 5, 2025

Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLaruo, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank for the opportunity to testify before you on key priorities for Fiscal Year 2027. As you begin your work on this next year's appropriations bill, I strongly urge you to consider increased funding for federal brain health initiatives.

Originally established in 2014, the NIH Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative, is responsible for facilitating groundbreaking discoveries and transforming scientific research. It brings together Federal and non-Federal partners with a singular common goal – accelerating the development of innovative neurotechnologies.

Congress has invested over a decade's worth of resources into the program. That investment has drastically improved the lives of individuals with debilitating brain and central nervous system conditions while also seeing breakthroughs in research methodologies and tools.

As co-chair of the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus and the Congressional Brain Injury Taskforce, I'm proud of the work my colleagues on this subcommittee continue to do. The progress we're seeing today didn't happen by accident. It is the result of serious commitment and a shared belief that America leads from the front.

The work being done through the BRAIN Initiative isn't just promising — it's mission-critical. Millions of Americans are fighting battles against brain diseases, conditions, traumatic injuries, and neurological conditions. They deserve answers. They deserve hope. And they deserve action.

That means backing the scientists on the front lines. These men and women are digging into the complexities of the human brain so we can better understand what healthy function looks like, what goes wrong, and how we fix it. Sustained investment isn't a luxury — it's a responsibility. Every dollar we commit moves us closer to real treatments, real cures, and real prevention strategies for some of the toughest diseases facing our nation. We don't quit on hard problems. We lean in. And when it comes to protecting the health and future of the American people, we lead.

BRAIN Initiative projects cut across disciplines and bring together some of the brightest minds in the country. Every one of these efforts reflect the core tenets of the Initiative: innovation, collaboration, transparency, and strong ethical neuroscience. That is not just talk. It is the standard.

We're prioritizing the development of cutting-edge tools, technologies, and shared resources that supercharge discovery. When you build the right platforms, you don't just make incremental progress, you change the game for the entire field. We are seeing the results. Breakthroughs that once seemed out of reach are now becoming reality. What used to be

theoretical is now tangible. That's what happens when you set high expectations, invest strategically, and empower great scientists to do what they do best.

For the first time ever, the BRAIN Initiative Cell Census Network (BICCN) program created a complete cell atlas of a mouse brain and started drafting a cell atlas of the human brain. We are closer than ever before to fundamentally understand how the human brain works on a cellular level. The Armamentarium for Precision Brain Cell Access, a large-scale project funded by the BRAIN Initiative, enables a new, emerging therapeutic toolkits to identify specific brain and spinal cord cells with unprecedented precision. All the work coming out of the BRAIN Initiative is laying the groundwork for highly targeted therapies that could one day treat a wide range of neurological and neuropsychiatric disorders at the cellular level – an advancement the was once never thought possible.

Our scientists have made tremendous progress, but we have a long path ahead of us if we are ever going to fully understand how the human brain works. Continued BRAIN Initiative research will spur groundbreaking products to market and will position our clinicians to provide truly lifechanging treatments to their patients in the most desperate need.

Congress has primarily funded the program through two funding streams. The first, and primary allocation, is through the 10 BRAIN Initiatives Institutes and Centers. Their missions and research portfolios make up the BRAIN Initiative within NIH. The second source comes from an additional funding authorization, the 21st Century Cures Act. The Cures Act

supplemental was signed into law in 2016 to boost key innovative programs, including the BRAIN Initiative.

Congress has provided much needed funding to the BRAIN Initiative through both funding streams, but now the program faces a crossroads despite the tremendous progress that has been made. This fiscal year marks the expiration of the CURES Act funding. Those funds are the reason for exponential growth in neuroscientific research and understanding. There is still so much more to discover.

In FY26, the BRAIN Initiative received \$234 million in base funding and an additional \$195 million from the CURES Innovation Fund, totaling \$429 million dedicated to federal brain health research. That \$429 million is still less than base funding in FY22. Now with the sunset of the CURES Act, the BRAIN Initiative possibly faces a drastic 45% cut in FY27 funding.

Without an increased investment in discretionary funding, all the progress the BRAIN Initiative has made faces a potential end. Progress towards curing for some of the most common and challenging brain conditions will come to a stop. Halting this work is dangerous for our scientists, our military, our veterans, our constituents, and the United States as a whole.

I respectfully ask that you please ensure sustained funding for the BRAIN Initiative's groundbreaking work by providing \$468 million in Fiscal Year 2027.