

National Pediatric Research Network Act

Inadequate Investment in Children's Health

Despite the fact that children make up about 20 percent of the entire U.S. population, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) dedicates only about 5 percent of its annual extramural research budget to pediatric research. If this investment is not expanded, discoveries of new treatments and therapies for some of the most devastating childhood diseases and conditions will be hindered, and the next generation of researchers will be discouraged from entering into the field of pediatrics.

Reversing this Trend

The National Pediatric Research Network Act seeks to reverse the current situation by strengthening and expanding NIH's pediatric research investments, helping to accelerate new discoveries and directly impacting the health and well-being of our nation's children.

National Pediatric Research Consortia

The centerpiece of the legislation will be the authorization of up to 20 National Pediatric Research Consortia at existing institutions throughout the nation. Modeled after the highly successful National Cancer Institute (NCI) Centers, the consortia will conduct both basic and translational research. The participating centers will ensure adequate funds are dedicated toward both basic and translational pediatric research increasing the efficiency of research efforts by expanding inter-institutional collaboration. The NIH is working to advance translational research through Clinical Translational Science Awards, but these centers are focused primarily on adult diseases, while this legislation creates consortia dedicated to pediatric research at the basic and translational levels.

"Hub and Spoke"

Unlike existing NIH initiatives in which only the largest research institutions typically receive funding, this legislation envisions that each consortium will operate in a "hub and spoke" framework with one central academic hub coordinating research and/or clinical work at numerous auxiliary sites. Such a system will result in efficiency and encourage collaboration to ensure that the strongest possible researchers, clinicians, and institutions are working together to achieve success.

National Pediatric Research Network Act Fast Facts

- Will authorize up to 20 National Pediatric Research Consortia, with each consortium partnering with numerous satellite facilities, allowing a large number of participating institutions.
- 5-year grants will be made, with potential 5 year renewals based on evaluations by a peer review panel and Director.
- Consortia will be selected through a competitive peer-review process, and private or public nonprofit agencies or institutions will all be eligible to apply.
- Some consortium locations will focus primarily on rare pediatric diseases, ensuring much needed attention to rare pediatric diseases.

It's time for a national research initiative focused on our children. This legislation is critical for advancing children's health because it will strengthen the federal investment in pediatric research by ensuring adequate funding for infrastructure and core services needed to support pediatric basic, translational and clinical research, and it will help accelerate basic research in fields that show special promise. Many adult diseases (e.g. diabetes, coronary heart disease, obesity, hypertension) have their beginnings in childhood and are influenced by children's genetic make-up. The National Pediatric Research Network Act will provide early research into these adult diseases and impact the overall healthcare costs of the country.