

Strengthen the Nation's Commitment to our Children by Cosponsoring the bipartisan National Pediatric Research Network Act

Legislation Provides Cost-Effective Tools to Drive Scientific Breakthroughs
and Develop Potential Therapies for Pediatric Patients

Overview

Investments in biomedical research by the federal government, primarily through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), have led to marked improvement in the health and well-being of our nation's population. While funding pressures are becoming increasingly more challenging, the need for a strong and sustained commitment to biomedical research is critically important. One field where this need is particularly acute is pediatrics.

A number of issues, including what has traditionally been a heavier focus on adult diseases and conditions and funding opportunities that place pediatrics at a disadvantage when it comes to research into conditions that affect adults, have curtailed the resources available for pediatric research in recent years. This has resulted in challenges, particularly in supporting the research infrastructure necessary to conduct 21st century sciences, to providing training slots for early-career researchers considering a future in pediatrics, and conducting clinical trials in pediatric patient populations. The time is now for Congress to establish a path forward to provide adequate federal support for pediatric research in the most cost-effective manner possible.

The National Pediatric Research Network Act

The National Pediatric Research Network Act is bipartisan and bicameral (H.R. 6163/S. 3461) legislation intended to address the shortfall in pediatric biomedical research using a well-proven network model to foster greater collaboration, coordination, and sharing of resources. The legislation, sponsored by Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Lois Capps (D-CA) and Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Roger Wicker (R-MS) would authorize the establishment of up to 20 pediatric research consortia throughout the nation. Each consortium would be investigator-initiated, consist of multiple institutions in a "hub and spoke" arrangement, and be competitively selected through a rigorous review process. Awards will provide resources to create the infrastructure necessary to conduct leading-edge pediatric research today and well into tomorrow, including support for promising young investigators beginning their careers in pediatrics. To promote collaboration and resource sharing, each consortium will be required to communicate regularly with one another.

In recognition that many pediatric diseases and conditions are rare diseases, the legislation requires that a subset of the consortia focus primarily on research conducted on pediatric rare diseases or conditions, including clinical trials evaluating potential therapies and treatments. To help ensure research findings are shared as quickly as possible, a data coordination center would be established to distribute findings, conduct multi-site initiatives, and store and report on the data.

Summary

Strong support for pediatric medical research is necessary for improving the health and well-being of our nation's children. The National Pediatric Research Network Act responds to an acute need by using a cost-effective and well-proven network model to strengthen the nation's commitment to our nation's children. Cosponsor H.R. 6361 and S. 3461 today!