



# Women First Research Coalition

## WFRC First Quarter 2022 Activities Update

### WFRC Virtual Advocacy Day

The WFRC held a successful virtual hill day on March 9. Staff scheduled 19 meetings with Hill staff which were attended by 12 representatives of the WFRC member organizations. WFRC's goals for the virtual hill day were to ask Congress to support WFRC's federal funding priorities, educate members of Congress about WFRC and the need for increased funding for women's health research; and develop relationships with Members of Congress and their staff. Specifically, the WFRC asked Congress to –

- Include WFRC's report language on "Women's Health Research Study" and the "Menopause RCDC" in the report that accompanies the FY 2023 Labor HHS appropriations bill; and
- Include increased funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the Labor HHS bill for FY 2023.

### WFRC Report Language Requests for Fiscal Year 2023

WFRC developed two report language requests for Fiscal Year 2023. The first request is for the Committee to include \$2 million for a National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) study on women's health research at the NIH. The second request is for the NIH to create a Research, Condition, and Disease Categorization (RCDC) code for Menopause. We are working with Senator Duckworth's office on leading a Dear Colleague letter in the Senate with these requests.

### Congress Finalizes FY 2022 Appropriations

On March 10, Congress passed an omnibus funding bill for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2022. The bill included \$108.3 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services, including \$45 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and \$1 billion for a new Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). Regarding ARPA-H, the language gave HHS Secretary Becerra 30 days to determine where the unauthorized agency should be placed—the two leading options are at NIH or under the HHS Secretary. The bill included the WFRC's request for report language on "Biomedical Research Workforce Diversity," as well as increased funding of \$4 million for the BIRCWH Fellows Program which was more than we had requested.

### Outreach on NASEM Study Legislative Proposal

WFRC staff continued to meet with congressional staff on our legislative proposal to authorize a NASEM study on women's health research at NIH. Staff met with the lead offices for Cures 2.0, Reps. Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Fred Upton (R-MI), as well as with the offices of Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), and Representatives Young Kim (R-CA), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA), Stephanie Bice (R-OK), Michael Burgess (R-TX), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Lois Frankel (D-FL) and Energy & Commerce committee staff.

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#### SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS & GYNECOLOGISTS • AMERICAN GYNECOLOGICAL & OBSTETRICAL SOCIETY • AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE • AMERICAN UROGYNECOLOGIC SOCIETY • INFECTIOUS DISEASE SOCIETY FOR OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY • NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR ACADEMIC SPECIALISTS IN GENERAL OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY OF FAMILY PLANNING • SOCIETY OF GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE • SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE ENDOCRINOLOGY AND INFERTILITY • SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE INVESTIGATION • SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

### Garnering Support for the PRGLAC Dear Colleague Letter

WFRC staff reached out to congressional staff to gain support for a Dear Colleague letter, circulated by Rep. Lois Frankel (D-FL), which urged HHS Secretary to reinstate the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant and Lactating Women's (PRGLAC) charter or create a similar task force to oversee the implementation of PRGLAC's recommendations and continue to monitor progress.

### Comments on Center for Scientific Review's Strategic Plan

The WFRC submitted comments on the NIH's Center for Scientific Review's (CSR) [draft strategic plan for 2022-2027](#). We encouraged CSR to increase the number of women and underrepresented minorities identified as potential reviewers, and to include women's health researchers on study sections.

### Request for Information (RFI) on the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

The WFRC submitted comments on the [NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for DEIA Framework](#). The Framework articulates NIH's priorities in three key areas that apply across NIH and aligns with the 2021-2025 NIH-Wide Strategic Plan. WFRC provided recommendations on the following issues: (1) Implementing organizational practices to center and prioritize DEIA in the workforce; (2) Growing and sustaining DEIA through structural and cultural change; and (3) Advancing DEIA through research.

### Supporting Legislation to Advance Research

- The WFRC signed on to a letter in support of the CAROL Act, a bill introduced by Representative Andy Barr (R-KY) that would support heart valve research at NHLBI and increase education and awareness.
- The WFRC endorsed and drafted a letter of support for the introduction of the NIH IMPROVE Act, a bill set to be introduced by Representative Lauren Underwood (D-IL) that would appropriate additional funds to continue the NICHD's IMPROVE study which is aimed at reducing maternal mortality and morbidity.
- The WFRC [endorsed](#) a resolution on Endometriosis Month, led by Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV).

### Information from the Agencies

#### ORWH Publishes Biennial Report

The Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) recently published the NIH Report of the Advisory Committee on Research on Women's Health: Office of Research on Women's Health and NIH Support for Research on Women's Health ([Biennial Report](#)).

#### NIH Workshop on IMPROVE Initiative

NIH launched the [Implementing a Maternal health and PRegnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone \(IMPROVE\)](#) initiative to support research on how to mitigate preventable maternal mortality, decrease severe maternal morbidity, and promote health equity. On February 15, NIH hosted the first IMPROVE Awardee [Workshop](#) to bring together researchers and clinicians supported by FY20 NIH IMPROVE funding to share their work and progress to date. Participants shared research results and lessons learned from their IMPROVE projects, identified common themes, highlighted shared research gaps and opportunities that can complement ongoing disease-specific work across NIH and collaborating organizations, and further defined the needs of pregnant and postpartum individuals to reduce preventable causes of morbidity and mortality.

## **Funding Opportunities from NIH I/Cs**

ORWH released a [NOSI: Research on the Health of Women of Understudied, Underrepresented and Underreported \(U3\) Populations \(NOT-OD-22-031\)](#) announcing the availability of administrative supplements to support research highlighting health inequities among populations of women in the US that are understudied, underrepresented, and underreported (U3) in biomedical research. This funding opportunity encourages projects examining common sources of disparities in the health of women and girls, with an emphasis on those that consider intersectionality, multidimensional models, and perspectives from multiple disciplines.

ORWH has published a [NOSI: Interventions Designed to Change the Culture to Mitigate or Eliminate Sexual Harassment in the Biomedical Research Enterprise \(NOT-OD-21-150\)](#). The NOSI's purpose is to inform potential applicants of the NIH's interest in supporting research on interventions designed to change the culture to mitigate or eliminate sexual harassment in the biomedical research enterprise. Submissions are open until October 14, 2023.