

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 22, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

We write to express our concerns with Dr. Francis Collins' continued tenure as Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). As your new Administration takes shape under your leadership, we urge you to appoint an NIH Director who aligns with your own priorities to make American biomedicine a global light, one who prioritizes successful, ethical stem cell research, eliminates funding for human embryo-destructive stem cell projects, and shifts fetal tissue research away from controversial abortion-specific tissue. While we deeply respect Dr. Collins' Christian faith and commitment to public service, the stances that Dr. Collins has taken in the past, regarding embryonic stem cell research and human cloning, are not life-affirming and directly conflict with the pro-life direction of your new Presidency. It is because of this troubling paradox that we ask you to re-consider his leadership role at NIH.

A remnant of the previous Administration, Dr. Collins served as an advisor to former President Obama during his 2008 campaign before his confirmation as NIH Director in 2009. Our underlying concern remains that Dr. Francis Collins will continue to pursue unethical human embryonic research priorities leftover from the previous Administration. This is particularly disturbing considering that actual NIH funding levels for human embryonic stem cell research have increased from \$146 million in FY2012 to \$180 million in FY2015 per NIH's most recent funding estimates for various Research, Condition, and Disease Categories (RCDC).

Detailed below are the two main areas of Dr. Collins' research that the pro-life community finds troublesome.

Dr. Collins has a record of supporting human embryonic stem cell research, science that involves the dismemberment and instrumental use of human embryos from fertility clinics.

On his first day as NIH Director, Dr. Collins stated in an interview with *Nature* science journal that funding for a human embryonic stem cell registry was a priority for him, an immediate priority as soon as he was confirmed as Director. The registry lists, in detail, stem cells harvested through the destruction of human embryos. It is solely through Dr. Collins' authority that such a registry exists, and under his leadership, research on these human embryos is also currently eligible to receive funding through taxpayer dollars. Indeed, he continues -- under your Administration -- to approve human embryonic stem cell lines, derived through the destruction of young human embryos, for federal taxpayer funding.

In 2010, Dr. Collins also fought against an attempt to cease federal taxpayer funding of embryonic stem cell research. In the U.S. Court of Appeals ruling in *Sherley v. Sebelius*, he filed a declaration to support federal funding for this practice. He also testified in a Senate hearing on September 16, 2010, that the *Sherley v. Sebelius* injunction that attempted to stop funding for embryonic stem cell research was a “cloud hanging over [the] field” of human embryonic stem cell research.

Dr. Collins supports the unethical and scientifically-questionable practice of human cloning, which involves creating human embryos for the sole purpose of harvesting embryonic stem cells (otherwise known as “clone and kill”) for research.

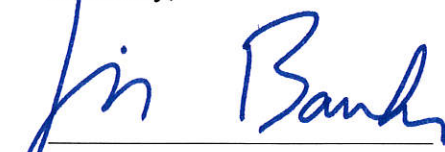
Dr. Collins publicly supported the clone and kill process in several different instances. In a *PBS* interview on July 21, 2006, Dr. Collins specifically supported the creation of cloned human embryos that would be destroyed to harvest their embryonic stem cells. The interview went as far to say that Dr. Collins’ prioritization of performing somatic cell nuclear transfer (cloning) removed the moral objections to destroying a human embryo.

Of even greater concern, in an interview with *Discover* on February 20, 2007, Dr. Collins stated that cloned embryos do not deserve the same fundamental moral status protections as naturally generated embryos.

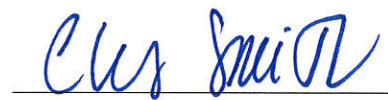
It is because of the examples listed above, which degrade human dignity, that we write to urge you to nominate your own NIH Director. We believe the American people deserve a leader at this agency who is your appointment, whose principles align with your pro-life values and your new Administration’s policy goals. The protection of human life and defense of the most vulnerable of our citizens are one of this nation’s most fundamental values, and Dr. Collins’ controversial research positions run counter to the pro-life principles of our Founding Fathers. As staunchly pro-life Members of Congress, we urge you to consider a pro-life personnel replacement to NIH Director Collins.

We look forward to working with your Administration in coordination of this effort and firmly believe that a change in NIH leadership now will ensure the right to life for generations of Americans in the future.

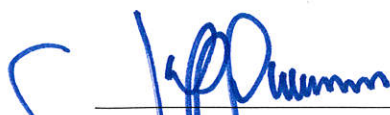
Sincerely,



Jim Banks
Member of Congress




Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Robert Pittenger
Member of Congress



Mike Kelly
Member of Congress

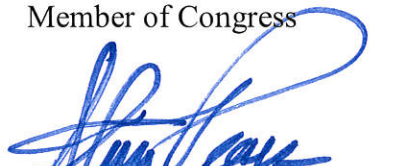

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

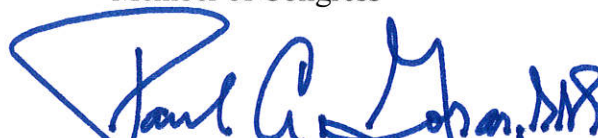

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Member of Congress



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