

Statement on Administration's Budget Blueprint

March 17, 2017

The President's abridged budget plan for Fiscal Year 2018, described as a "budget blueprint," will place a severe strain on the American people, short-term and long-term. The stated goal of the Administration is to create a budget that "puts America first" by shifting significant Federal resources to national security. In doing so, however, the proposed budget makes deep cuts to the very agencies and programs that have made this nation great.

America is stronger when our people are healthy, our educational system is first class, and our national security is protected. All of these require investment in research across all the sciences. Research is needed to improve our understanding of Alzheimer's disease, cancer, traumatic brain injury, and drug addiction – from the lab to the clinic. Research is needed to inform our understanding of dyslexia and autism – from neuroimaging research to educational settings. And research is needed to develop fundamental knowledge about humans and the world in which we live – from behavioral and social sciences to mathematical and physical sciences.

To make America strong, the Administration and Congress must work across the divisions that divide us to create a long-term vision for addressing the deficit and debt that does not set our country back. The cuts proposed in this budget – including a 19% cut to the National Institutes of Health and a major restructuring of health and human service agencies – will undermine important research programs and put the next generation of scientists out of work and training programs. While we do not know the full impact on the nation's science infrastructure, including the funding picture for agencies such as the National Science Foundation or independent research arms of the federal government such as the Institute of Education Sciences, the push to increase defense at the expense of every other government program suggests the cuts will be even more widespread.

Support for research across all sciences must be a priority. The bulk of the nation's science infrastructure is found within a part of the budget that has already seen severe cuts since the passage of the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011 – and this continues today. The BCA set caps for a ten-year period and implemented additional cost-cutting measures known as sequestration. Congress has seen the impact of these cuts back home, and as a result, enacted legislation twice to partially roll back the sequestration cuts in a balanced way. The budget caps remain in place, and additional sequestration cuts are scheduled for October 2018. These caps and cuts have already strained America's research enterprise, and additional cuts of the magnitude described in the budget proposal will be devastating.

We urge the Administration, and especially Congress, to take a hard look at the impact of prolonged, austere budgets on the vitality of the nation's research infrastructure and recommit to building our research system, the health and welfare of our people, and our nation's security.

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The Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences is a coalition of scientific societies that share an interest in advancing the sciences of mind, brain, and behavior, and in using the results of that research for the public good.