

November X, 2023

Dr. Monica Bertagnolli
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 10892

Dear Dr. Bertagnolli:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation to serve as the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We write to commend you on your outstanding scientific qualifications, express our enthusiasm for your leadership, and offer ourselves as resources as you work to advance your ambitious goals and best serve the mission of NIH.

The undersigned organizations collectively represent tens of thousands of scientists whose research in the behavioral, brain, cognitive, economic, and social sciences focus on human health and well-being and carry significant potential to improve public health. As was exemplified by the COVID pandemic, an effective vaccine was only part of the necessary solution; we could have better leveraged these disciplines not only to increase vaccination uptake but also to better communicate and facilitate recommended health behaviors such as social distancing, mask wearing, and COVID testing.

We appreciated your thoughtful and inspiring remarks during your confirmation hearing with the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. We are eager to engage around the broad range of behavioral and social science questions that you referenced. With respect to your laudable goal of expanding clinical trials that reflect the full diversity of Americans, our members think deeply about bias, trust, and health communication – all elements that will be critical to achieving this goal.

Our scientists examine the interactions between biological, behavioral, and social factors to better understand the complex systems that contribute to health outcomes. We offer considerable expertise to contribute to your priorities around reducing obesity, improving mental health, and addressing stigma.

In your new role, we encourage you to take full advantage of the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) and its new Director, Dr. Jane Simoni. OBSSR serves an efficient coordinating role, improving the synergy of basic and applied behavioral and social sciences research with biomedical research; enhancing the research infrastructure, methods, and measures needed to support a more cumulative and integrated approach; and facilitating the adoption of research findings into practice. Capitalizing on new OBSSR leadership by engaging with Dr. Simoni and involving her and her team in the NIH Office of the Director and trans-NIH activities would be a meaningful first step toward enhancing its integrative capacity.

We are grateful for your willingness to serve in this role and for your established commitment to advancing health for our nation. We will make every effort to support your success in this role and embrace the opportunity to leverage the behavioral and social sciences to improve public health and wellbeing.

Please contact Juliane Baron, FABBS, with any questions. (jbaron@fabbs.org or 202.669.4834)

Sincerely,