



Federation of Associations in
Behavioral & Brain Sciences

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Juliane Baron
Ex-Officio, Executive Director

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed changes to the NIH mission statement. Please accept these comments on behalf of the Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (FABBS), a coalition of 29 scientific societies and 60 academic departments that come together to advance the rigor, impact, equity, and accessibility of our disciplines. Our members offer a breadth of relevant expertise including assessing the impact of stigma to understanding cognitive and implicit bias.

FABBS applauds the establishment of the NIH Advisory Committee to the Directory (ACD) Working Group on Diversity, Subgroup on Individuals with Disabilities and commends the careful thought and consideration that went into these proposed changes and consideration of diverse populations.

FABBS strongly supports the recommendation to amend the NIH mission statement to better support disability inclusion and remove any perpetuation “of ableist beliefs that disabled people are flawed and need to be fixed”. We recognize that the current language has the potential to, unintentionally, further marginalize persons with disabilities. Accordingly, we support the proposed language “to optimize health and prevent or reduce illness.”

However, FABBS has reservations about the addition “for all people”. While we appreciate the intention to be inclusive, our members are concerned that the language may inadvertently obscure the importance of addressing health disparities, a crosscutting theme of the strategic plan. FABBS encourages NIH to consider slight modifications to the recommendation, for example “...to equitably optimize health and prevent...” or “...to optimize health and prevent or reduce illness equitably across all populations.” FABBS researchers have taught me that it is possible to improve overall health outcomes while overlooking or even exacerbating health disparities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes and offer to be a resource in the future if the need arises. If you have any questions, please contact Juliane Baron at jbaron@fabbs.org or 202.669.4834.

Sincerely,

Juliane Baron

Executive Director, FABBS