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February 5, 1985

The Honorable David Durenberger
U.S. Senate
353 Russell Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: NIH Funding

Dear Senator Durenberger:

The current Administration proposal to affect NIH funding is a major departure from usual procedure when budget cutting is needed. In my view, it is a dangerous one.

By forcing multiple-year funding for grants approved for fiscal year '86, there will be an immediate effect to reduce the payline from the 36th to the 26th percentile of approved grants.

I believe there will be a medium-term effect, equally serious, to reduce the NIH commitment base. This distorts and disguises a continued cutback for several subsequent years.

I suspect that it will have a long-term effect of reducing the research and career base in one of the major remaining areas of conceptual and technical leadership which our nation holds in international trade and influence: health and medical science.

I am personally convinced that this is not the best way to cut the NIH budget and that it is important that your staff attempt to verify these predictions of its effect. The solutions, I suppose, should be sought in across-the-board program cuts comparable to other major programs, and in administrative costs including the heavy burden of indirect costs.

Sincerely,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.
Professor and Director

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cc: Senator Edward Kennedy
Congressman Henry Waxman
Dr. Kenneth Shine, President, American Heart Association
Dr. Mary Jane Jesse, Past President, American Heart Association
Dr. Elliot Corday
Dr. Neal Vanselow, Vice President of Health Sciences, University of Minnesota
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