

Director Collins,

Institutional NIH Training Grants play a critical role in developing the careers of STEM trainees across our country. Funded graduate programs make advanced degrees attainable for many Americans from diverse backgrounds. Importantly, NIH funding reduces the burden on higher-education institutions to raise tuition or fees to provide funded graduate programs themselves.

Predoctoral trainee stipends are currently capped by the NIH at an annual rate of \$25,320/year, increasing slightly every year. These funds are often supplemented by the trainee's institution because alone the NIH stipend is not enough. Sadly, for many individuals from underrepresented backgrounds in STEM - for black Americans, for first-generation scholars, for anyone from a background steeped in generations of systemic racism and poverty - this funding is not enough.

Graduate students who do receive stipends still face financial insecurity at an alarming rate. Rising costs of living and increasing housing costs urgently threaten to discriminate against those who cannot afford to face years of financial insecurity. We believe this to be one of the reasons diversity remains such a problem in the sciences.

Dr. Collins, I would imagine that this message does resonate with you, and it is why I am writing to you. We must take immediate action to raise the predoctoral and postdoctoral trainee stipend caps to ensure research science in America can become inclusive for people of all backgrounds. I am asking you to advocate for students before Congress and ask them to approve a predoctoral stipend cap of \$32,000 beginning next year.

We cannot allow privilege to decide who becomes a scientist.