

Learn more about [LSEG](#)My News [Search](#) [≡](#)

NIH scientists speak out over estimated \$12 billion in Trump funding cuts

By Chad Terhune

June 9, 2025 4:53 PM EDT · Updated 3 days ago

 [1/6] National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases employee Jenna Norton, National Institute for General Medical Sciences employee Ian Morgan and National Institute of Allergy and... [Purchase Licensing Rights](#) [Read more](#)

[Summary](#) [Companies](#)

NIH employees say cuts risk patient health and waste tax dollars

Researchers say agency has ignored scientific vetting to "cater to political whims"

NIH director faces budget questions at Senate hearing Tuesday

June 9 (Reuters) - Dozens of scientists, researchers and other employees at the U.S. National Institutes of Health issued a rare public rebuke Monday criticizing the Trump administration for major spending cuts that "harm the health of Americans and people across the globe," politicize research and "waste public resources."

More than 60 current employees sent their letter to NIH director Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and members of Congress who oversee NIH. Bhattacharya is scheduled to testify Tuesday at the U.S. Senate appropriations committee about his agency's budget.

Keep up with the latest medical breakthroughs and healthcare trends with the Reuters Health Rounds newsletter. Sign up [here](#).

Overall, more than 340 current and recently terminated NIH employees signed the letter, about 250 of them anonymously.

In their letter, NIH staff members said the agency had terminated 2,100 research grants totaling about \$9.5 billion and an additional \$2.6 billion in contracts since President Donald Trump took office Jan. 20. The contracts often support research, from covering equipment to nursing staff working on clinical trials.

These terminations "throw away years of hard work and millions of dollars" and put patient health at risk, the letter said. NIH clinical trials "are being halted without regard to participant safety, abruptly stopping medications or leaving participants with unmonitored device implants."

In a statement shared with Reuters, Bhattacharya said the employees' letter "has some fundamental misconceptions about the policy directions the NIH has taken in recent months ... Nevertheless, respectful dissent in science is productive. We all want the NIH to succeed."

In prior remarks, Bhattacharya has pledged support for Kennedy's Make America Healthy Again agenda, and he has said that means focusing the federal government's "limited resources" directly on combating chronic diseases. At his Senate confirmation hearings in March, Bhattacharya said he would ensure scientists working at NIH and funded by the agency have the necessary resources to meet its mission.

NIH is the world's largest public funder of biomedical research and has long enjoyed bipartisan support from U.S. lawmakers. The Trump administration has proposed cutting \$18 billion, or 40%, from NIH's budget next year, which would leave the agency with \$27 billion. Nearly 5,000 NIH employees and contractors have been laid off under Kennedy's restructuring of U.S. health agencies, according to NIH staff.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees NIH, said the agency's staffing must evolve to meet changing priorities and to ensure good use of taxpayer dollars. The official also defended NIH's funding decisions, saying the agency was "working to remove ideological influence from the scientific process."

Dr. Jenna Norton, a program director within NIH's division of kidney, urologic and hematologic diseases, was one of 69 current employees who signed the letter as of early Monday. She said speaking out publicly was worth the risk to her career and family.

"I am much more worried about the risks of not speaking up," Norton said. "There are very real concerns that we're being asked to do likely illegal activities, and certainly unethical activities that breach our rules."

The organizers of the letter allowed people employed at the NIH as of Jan. 20 to sign. They said 258 of the 342 people who signed the letter currently work at NIH, while others were recently terminated as probationary workers or "subject to reductions in force."

In the letter, Norton and other NIH employees asked Bhattacharya to restore grants that were delayed or terminated for political reasons, where officials ignored peer review to "cater to political whims." They wrote that Bhattacharya had failed to uphold his legal duty to spend congressionally appropriated funds.

One program director at the NIH's National Cancer Institute, who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation, said she has repeatedly been asked to cancel research grants for no valid reason and in violation of agency rules. She said she fears she could become the target of lawsuits from grantees challenging those decisions.

Dr. Benjamin Feldman, a staff scientist and core director at NIH's Institute of Child Health and Human Development, said he and other researchers want to work with Bhattacharya on reversing the cuts and restoring the NIH as a "beacon for science around the world."

"This is really a hit to the whole enterprise of biomedical research in the United States," Feldman said.

Dr. Ian Morgan, a postdoctoral fellow at the NIH, signed the letter and said he has heard from university researchers about patients losing access to novel cancer treatments in clinical trials due to the uncertainty over NIH funding. He also worries about the long-term effect from gutting NIH's investment in basic science research that can lead to lifesaving treatments years later.

The NIH employees, based in Bethesda, Maryland, named their dissent the "Bethesda Declaration," modeled after Bhattacharya's Great Barrington Declaration in 2020 that called on public health officials to roll back lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our hope is that by modeling ourselves after the Great Barrington Declaration that maybe he'll see himself in our dissent," Norton said.

Reporting by Chad Terhune in Los Angeles; Editing by Michele Gershberg, Chizu Nomiyama and David Gregorio

Our Standards: [The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles](#)

Suggested Topics:

[Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals](#) [Public Health](#) [Healthcare Providers](#)

[Purchase Licensing Rights](#)

Read Next

Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals

US health chief says he promised Senator Cassidy a vaccine panel member selection

10:01 PM UTC

Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals

US FDA approves expanded use of Moderna's RSV vaccine for at-risk adults

ago

Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals

Novo Nordisk plans to start late-stage trials of obesity drug amyretin next year

6:12 PM UTC

Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals

US FDA approves UroGen's bladder cancer drug

6:52 PM UTC

Sponsored Content**dianomi** Advertise Here ▾**Market Volatility in Retirement: Are You Prepared?**Sponsored by
Charles Schwab**Today's Stock Options Market Update**Sponsored by
Charles Schwab**Sponsored Content****dianomi** Advertise Here ▾**Cryptocurrencies and Taxes: What You Should Know**

Sponsored by Charles Schwab

**A Look at What's Impacting Futures Markets**

Sponsored by Charles Schwab

**Why is Bitcoin Up or Down? You Have Crypto Questions. We Have Answers.**

Sponsored by Bitwise Asset Management

**Take a Shot at Saving**

Sponsored by Progressive Insurance

**Seniors Born 1941-1979 Receive 55 Benefits This Month if They Ask**

Sponsored by WalletJump

**Safeguarding Your 401(k) During Market Turbulence**

Sponsored by Oppenheimer & Co. Inc.

**Business >****Oil prices jump more than \$4 after Israel strikes Iran**

· June 12, 2025 · 8:48 PM EDT · 4 min ago

Oil prices jumped more than \$4 a barrel on Friday after Israel said it struck Iran, raising concerns of escalating tensions in the Middle East that may affect oil supplies.

[Stocks slide, oil and gold jump after Israel strikes Iran](#)
13 min ago

Quotes: Stocks, oil sell off as Israel strikes Iran

16 min ago

Autos & Transportation

Norfolk Southern board elects Richard Anderson as chair

24 min ago

Autos & Transportation

Boeing CEO cancels trip to Paris Airshow, GE postpones investor day after fatal crash

41 min ago

Sponsored Content

Dianomi Advertise Here ▶



Investing Outlook

This "Awesome Resource" Could Power America for 30,000 Years...



Charles Schwab

Cryptocurrencies and Taxes: What You Should Know



Charles Schwab

Today's Stock Options Market Update

WalletJump

Seniors Born 1941-1979 Receive 55 Benefits This Month if They Ask



Oppenheimer & Co. Inc.

Spring Forward: Transferring Wealth Across Generations



Charles Schwab

Sometimes you know you could have done better. Invest with Schwab.



Bitwise Asset Management

Crypto Market Analysis From the Experts. Every Week. In Five Minutes.



Charles Schwab

Access 800+ stocks and ETFs, plus futures markets, around the clock.



Charles Schwab

The Name Your Price® tool

Try our handy online tool today and we'll help get you options that fit your budget.



Latest

[Home](#)

[Authors](#)

[Topic Sitemap](#)

[Archive](#)

[Article Sitemap](#)

Media

[Videos](#)

[Pictures](#)

[Graphics](#)

[Podcasts](#)

Browse

[World](#)

[Business](#)

[Markets](#)

[Sustainability](#)

[Legal](#)

[Breakingviews](#)

[Technology](#)

[Investigations](#)

[Sports](#)

[Science](#)

[Lifestyle](#)

[About Reuters](#)

[About Reuters](#) ▾

[Advertise with Us](#) ▾

[Careers](#) ▾

[Reuters News Agency](#) ▾

[Brand Attribution Guidelines](#) ▾

[Reuters and AI](#) 
[Reuters Leadership](#) 
[Reuters Fact Check](#)
[Reuters Diversity Report](#) 

Stay Informed
[Download the App \(iOS\)](#) 
[Download the App \(Android\)](#) 
[Newsletters](#)
[Subscribe](#)

Information you can trust

Reuters, the news and media division of Thomson Reuters, is the world's largest multimedia news provider, reaching billions of people worldwide every day. Reuters provides business, financial, national and international news to professionals via desktop terminals, the world's media organizations, industry events and directly to consumers.

Follow Us



LSEG Products

[Workspace](#) 

Access unmatched financial data, news and content in a highly-customised workflow experience on desktop, web and mobile.

[Data Catalogue](#) 

Browse an unrivalled portfolio of real-time and historical market data and insights from worldwide sources and experts.

[World-Check](#) 

Screen for heightened risk individual and entities globally to help uncover hidden risks in business relationships and human networks.

[Advertise With Us](#)  [Advertising Guidelines](#) [Purchase Licensing Rights](#) 

All quotes delayed a minimum of 15 minutes. See here for a complete list of exchanges and delays.

[Cookies](#)  [Terms & Conditions](#) [Privacy](#)  [Digital Accessibility](#)  [Corrections](#) [Site Feedback](#) 

© 2025 Reuters. All rights reserved

