FY 2014 Testimony for the National Institutes of Health

Susan Barman, Ph.D., President, American Physiological Society

The American Physiological Society (APS) thanks the subcommittee for its ongoing support of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Research carried out by the NIH contributes to our understanding of health and disease, which allows all Americans to look forward to a healthier future. The APS urges you to make every effort to provide the NIH with no less than $32 billion in FY 2014. This level of funding is necessary to prevent further erosion of research capacity and ensure a sustainable future.

The APS recognizes that the economic challenges facing the country demand that government resources be used judiciously. Federal investment in research is critically important because breakthroughs in basic and translational research are the foundation for new drugs and therapies that help patients, fuel our economy, and provide jobs. The federal government is the primary funding source for discovery research through competitive grants awarded by the NIH, and the private sector partners with academic researchers to develop research findings into new treatments. This system of public-private partnership has been critical to maintaining U.S. leadership in the biomedical sciences.

**NIH funds outstanding science**

As a result of improved health care, Americans are living longer and healthier lives in the 21st century than ever before. However, chronic diseases such as heart failure, diabetes, respiratory disease and cancer continue to inflict a heavy burden in the United States and around the world. A recent report from the World Health Organization showed that chronic, noninfectious diseases now cause more deaths globally than all other diseases combined. Additional economic and health challenges are on the horizon as the U.S. population ages and begins to require more health care. The NIH invests heavily in basic research to understand the physiological mechanisms at work in health and disease. This knowledge is crucial to the development of safe and effective interventions and prevention strategies.
NIH nurtures the biomedical research enterprise

In addition to supporting research, the NIH must also address workforce issues to ensure that our nation’s researchers are ready to meet the challenges they will face in the future. The economic pressures placed on the biomedical research enterprise after years of sub-inflationary budget increases are being compounded by sequestration cuts. Scientists at all stages of their careers are struggling to maintain their research programs, but this has particularly placed scientists in the early career stages at risk. To address this problem, the NIH has taken steps to foster the next generation of investigators including:

- Continuing a commitment to fund new investigators at approximately the same rate as established investigators.
- Establishing a working group of the Advisory Committee to the Director to examine future needs and make recommendations for ensuring a diverse and sustainable future biomedical workforce.

The NIH is also home to the Institutional Development Award (IDeA) Program. Established in 1993, the goal of the IDeA program is to broaden the geographic distribution of NIH funds by serving researchers and institutions in areas that have not historically received significant NIH funding. IDeA builds research capacity and improves competitiveness in those states through the development of shared resources, infrastructure and expertise. IDeA currently serves institutions and investigators in 23 states and Puerto Rico.

The APS is a professional society dedicated to fostering research and education as well as the dissemination of scientific knowledge concerning how the organs and systems of the body work. The Society was founded in 1887 and now has nearly 10,000 member physiologists. APS members conduct NIH-supported research at colleges, universities, medical schools, and other public and private research institutions across the U.S.

The APS joins the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) in urging that NIH be provided with no less than $32 billion in FY 2014.