



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

February 17, 2016

The Honorable Brendan F. Boyle
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Boyle:

Thank you for your interest in non-human primate research supported and conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

I would like to begin by emphasizing that research with non-human primates and other animal species is key to helping us understand and improve human health in a multitude of ways, including the development of treatments and interventions. For example, research with cynomolgus macaques has enabled a promising vaccine candidate for Ebola to enter into clinical trials in humans. A safe and effective Ebola vaccine will be a critically important tool to help prevent Ebola virus disease and contain future outbreaks. This is only one example in a field of many, whether it is advances in neuroscience or cardiovascular disease, which demonstrates the importance of this critical research resource. Ultimately, research with non-human primates is an essential component of the NIH mission and many patients have reaped—and will continue to reap—dramatic benefits as a result of this research.

The NIH takes animal welfare concerns seriously, and has numerous policies and protocols in place to assure the ethical treatment and use of these invaluable resources. All NIH-funded research with animals is reviewed to ensure that: 1) the science is highly meritorious, and 2) the welfare of the animals is protected. The research at the NIH Animal Center in Poolesville, Maryland, was no exception. In this instance, leadership of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), in consultation with its Board of Scientific Counselors, decided to phase out this program due to programmatic priorities and the desire to optimize research efficiency within the NICHD intramural research program.

Looking forward, and to ensure that research with non-human primates continues to be conducted responsibly and in accordance with the highest ethical standards, the NIH will convene a workshop in the summer of 2016 to review the ethical policies and procedures associated with the conduct of this research. As requested in the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies report language, this meeting will include outside experts across scientific disciplines such as primatology and animal behavior, as well as ethicists and experts in animal health and welfare, to ensure that NIH has the appropriate policies and procedures in place for conducting research with non-human primates. The NIH expects to provide the summary of this meeting by December 2016 to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies.

The Honorable Brendan F. Boyle
Page 2

The NIH remains committed to protecting animals while, at the same time, advancing biomedical research and human health. Thank you again for your attention to this important matter. I will also send this response to the co-signers of the letter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Francis S. Collins".

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director