



## **Primer: The National Institutes of Health: A Clinic of Woke Weaponization**

By: Nikolaus Schuster

### **Background**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is the leading federal biomedical and health research agency.<sup>1</sup> NIH promotes woke ideological agendas that prioritize politics over objective science and uses its authority and funding to weaponize its influence against the American people. The Trump administration's efforts to purge woke weaponization from the agency should be celebrated, but more needs to be done to stop this agency from using its vast resources to poison public health in the United States. NIH currently oversees a \$47 billion budget.<sup>2</sup> President Donald Trump's FY 2026 Budget Request reduces this to \$27 billion.<sup>3</sup> The Trump administration has also terminated nearly \$1.8 billion in NIH grants.<sup>4</sup> Congress should help the Trump administration defang this woke and weaponized agency.

### **NIH Organizational Structure: Office of the Director and Institutes and Centers<sup>5</sup>**

The agency comprises the Office of the Director, in charge of policy and program coordination, and twenty-seven institutes and centers, each of which focuses on particular diseases, research areas, or agency support services.<sup>6</sup>

NIH's institutes and centers have become especially woke and weaponized. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed that the top echelon of NIH functions as a political arm of the left: The agency's leaders orchestrated the suppression of the theory that the COVID-19 pandemic was the

---

<sup>1</sup> Kavya Sekar, "The National Institutes of Health (NIH): Background and Congressional Issues," (January 13, 2025, Congressional Research Service, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R41705?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22The+Fogarty+Center%22%7D&s=2&r=2>).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Russell T. Vought, Director, Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget, letter to the Hon. Susan B. Collins, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, May 2, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Fiscal-Year-2026-Discretionary-Budget-Request.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Aria Bendix, "Trump Administration Cut More Than \$1.8 Billion in NIH Grants," NBC News, May 8, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/trump-administration-cut-18-billion-nih-grants-rcna205568>.

<sup>5</sup> Sekar, "The National Institutes of Health (NIH): Background and Congressional Issues."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

result of a lab leak.<sup>7</sup> Many NIH institutes and centers also promote woke concepts such as transgenderism and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).<sup>8</sup> As stated above, the Trump administration has already terminated nearly \$1.8 billion in NIH grants.<sup>9</sup> Examples of terminated grants include the following<sup>10</sup>:

- \$377,894 for studying “microbiome-mediated effects of gender affirming hormone therapy in mice”
- \$35,098 for studying “Cross Sex Steroid Therapy and Cardiovascular Risk in the Transgender Female”
- \$415,735 for studying “facilitators of and barriers to healthcare utilization among racially and ethnically diverse transgender and gender nonbinary young adults”
- \$2,521,043 for “SilverBills: A Legal, Technical, and Financial Tool for Aging LGBTQ+ Individuals with Impaired Cognition”
- \$36,978 for “a multi-level study of the link between fear of deportation and mental health in Latinx young adults: The role of systemic inflammation and related risk and protective factors”
- \$42,014 for “Intersectional Discrimination and Sexual Health Among Young Black Men who Have Sex with Men: A Mixed Methods Study”
- \$100,507 for studying “the social influences on sexual health among Latinx adolescents and emerging adults who identify as LGBTQ+ in an agricultural community”
- \$267,121 for “understanding transgender women’s immune and behavioral responses to seasonal COVID-19 vaccines to improve their uptake”

---

<sup>7</sup> U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, “COVID Select Subcommittee Releases Dr. Fauci’s Transcript, Highlights Key Takeaways in New Memo,” press release, May 31, 2024, <https://oversight.house.gov/release/covid-select-subcommittee-releases-dr-faucis-transcript-highlights-key-takeaway-s-in-new-memo/>.

<sup>8</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), “1/ Since 2021 the National Institutes of Health has spent \*\$151,824,185\* on Diversity and Inclusion projects. The NIH spent \$151,824,185 on DEI in just 4 years. Let’s take a look at what the NIH is doing with your money. A Thread/ 🧵,” X, December 3, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1864065177517457887](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1864065177517457887).

<sup>9</sup> Bendix, “Trump Administration Cut More Than \$1.8 Billion in NIH Grants.”

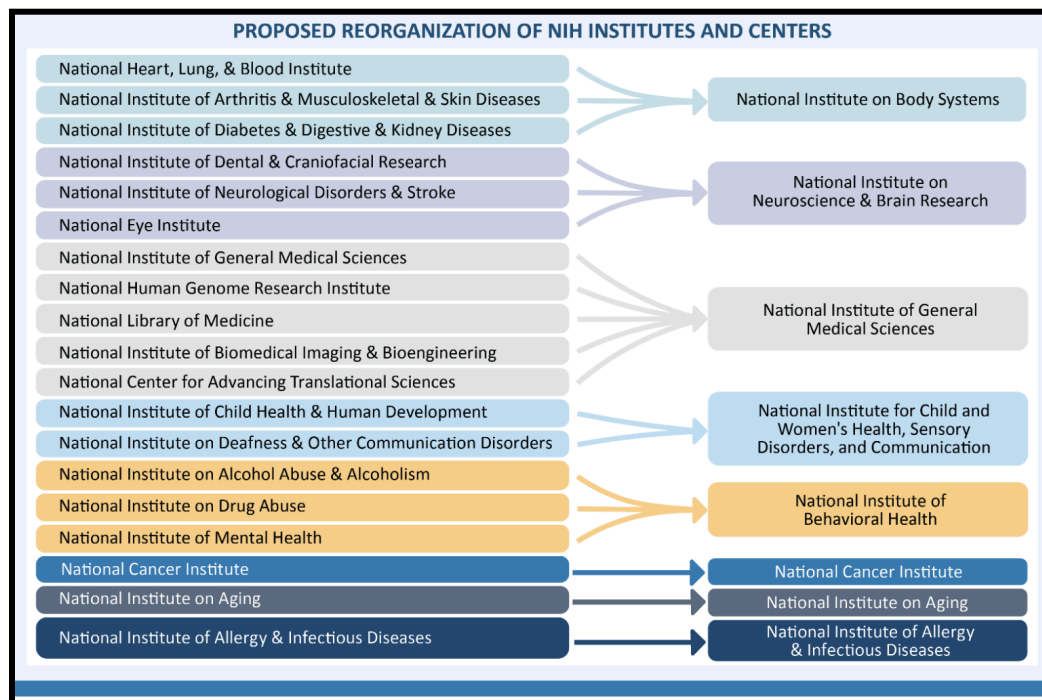
<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “HHS Grants Terminated,” August 8, 2025, [https://taggs.hhs.gov/Content/Data/HHS\\_Grants\\_Terminated.pdf](https://taggs.hhs.gov/Content/Data/HHS_Grants_Terminated.pdf).

- \$346,500 for “investigating associations and mediating effects between climate and mental health and violence in informal settlements in Kenya”
- \$348,977 for “Event-level Antecedents of Heavy Drinking Among Bisexual and Heterosexual Women with and without Histories of Sexual Assault”

It is important to note that over 80 percent of NIH-supported research is funded through grants and contracts.<sup>11</sup> The types of grants NIH funds are a strong indicator of the policy preferences of NIH personnel. Woke ideologies have taken root at the agency and are an integral part of its operations.

### HHS Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Reorganization

The president’s FY 2026 Budget Request supports a proposed reorganization of NIH’s institutes and centers, eliminating some and streamlining the rest into an eight-institute structure that realigns functions and research portfolios.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Sekar, “The National Institutes of Health (NIH): Background and Congressional Issues.”

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Fiscal Year 2026 Budget in Brief,” accessed August 14, 2025, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fy-2026-budget-in-brief.pdf>.

## **Office of the Director: A Focal Point of Woke Ideology**

Even though Trump won the 2024 presidential election and is now working to implement reforms to the NIH on the executive level, Congress needs to ensure that the NIH Director's Office is never again infected by woke ideology. The same goes for the NIH's institutes and centers. Congress should consider reforming or eliminating them in accordance with the president's FY 2026 Budget Request.

The NIH director is in charge of policy and program coordination.<sup>13</sup> This means he has direct control over policy at NIH. NIH's longtime director, Dr. Francis Collins, who stepped down in 2021, permitted woke activists in the medical field to use federal government resources that were intended for public health initiatives to spread woke ideology. Before he left office, Collins wrote a letter outlining NIH's efforts to "end structural racism and racial inequities in biomedical research."<sup>14</sup> The NIH did not just adopt some woke policy around the edges of the agency; throughout the Biden administration, the NIH stated on its websites that "diversity is our lifeblood" and that DEI is a "core value" of the agency.<sup>15</sup> NIH has spent millions on DEI projects, including \$147 million on Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST).<sup>16</sup> The stated goal of FIRST was to create a "community of scientists committed to diversity and inclusive excellence" in order to attain "research workforce diversity."<sup>17</sup> DEI concepts have become a key part of the operating structure of NIH with the support of the Director's Office.

Furthermore, several intelligence agencies now confirm evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic was the result of a laboratory leak.<sup>18</sup> The fact that neither Collins nor Dr. Anthony Fauci was able to prove that work funded by NIH grants to the Wuhan Institute of Virology did not contribute to

---

<sup>13</sup> Sekar, "The National Institutes of Health (NIH): Background and Congressional Issues."

<sup>14</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), "13/ Much of the blame for this lies with Francis Collins, head of the NIH, who wrote a letter saying the NIH was going to take on 'structural racism' in medicine. Once he did that, he gave the woke activists a pretense to launder their ideology into everything NIH touches," X, July 10, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1811138668058562618](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1811138668058562618).

<sup>15</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), "2/ It is not just that the NIH is adopting some woke policy around the edges, the NIH has stated very explicitly that 'diversity is our lifeblood' and that the NIH is going to make DEI a 'Core Value' in everything it does. NIH it has set up an enormous bureaucracy to fund this:," X, July 10, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1811125706811711921](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1811125706811711921).

<sup>16</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), "1/ Since 2021 the National Institutes of Health has spent \*\$151,824,185\* on Diversity and Inclusion projects. The NIH spent \$151,824,185 on DEI in just 4 years. Let's take a look at what the NIH is doing with your money. A Thread/ 🧵," X, December 3, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1864065177517457887](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1864065177517457887).

<sup>17</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), "2/ NIH spent \$147,023,061 on 'Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation' (FIRST) The goal of first is creating a 'community of scientists committed to diversity and inclusive excellence' with the goal of attaining 'research workforce diversity,'" X, December 3, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1864067721287332180](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1864067721287332180).

<sup>18</sup> CBS News/Associated Press, "CIA Now Says COVID Most Likely Originated from a Lab Leak but Has 'Low Confidence' in Its Assessment," *CBS News*, January 27, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cia-covid-likely-originated-lab-low-confidence-assessment/>.

that possible leak has undermined public confidence in the NIH.<sup>19</sup> The agency's pandemic response also raises questions about how the President and Congress can hold the director accountable if he pollutes the agency with dangerous ideologies and initiatives that undermine public health.

The Trump administration's FY 2026 Budget Request proposes to reform NIH and refocus its research activities to help Americans become healthier, along with consolidating multiple overlapping and ill-focused programs.<sup>20</sup> Congress should enact the FY 2026 proposal and consider drafting additional appropriations language preventing the NIH director from implementing DEI practices within the agency. NIH recently indicated that it will cease funding DEI initiatives; however, it is important for Congress and the Trump Administration to remain vigilant over NIH because bad actors within its bureaucracy may try to fund DEI initiatives under the guise of "minority health", which is a code word for "health equity", which is a code word for DEI.

### **Woke Weaponization in NIH Centers and Institutes**

Many of the twenty-seven NIH institutes and centers, each of which focuses on particular diseases, research areas, or agency support services, have been captured by woke ideology. Congress should require a report from the NIH Director's Office detailing the grants and contracts funded by NIH's institutes and centers over the last ten years, including the officials who approved them. Trump's appointees at the NIH should continue removing personnel responsible for funding woke projects and cancel all problematic funding initiated by NIH institutes and centers. Also, given the size of NIH's funding, more political appointees should be added to NIH. All grants and spending proposals should be individually analyzed and approved by a politically appointed official before being obligated to ensure they comply with executive orders and federal law. Trump appointees should target projects like the following:

- The National Institute on Minority Health and Disparities is an institute within NIH that has been known to promote woke policy. For example, the institute spent \$808,748 on the following study: "Racial Justice Activism Intervention to Address Structural Racism and Prevent Depression in Black and Latinx Youth."<sup>21</sup> It also spent \$135,701 on a study about

---

<sup>19</sup> U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "COVID Select Subcommittee Releases Dr. Fauci's Transcript, Highlights Key Takeaways in New Memo," press release, May 31, 2024, <https://oversight.house.gov/release/covid-select-subcommittee-releases-dr-faucis-transcript-highlights-key-takeaway-s-in-new-memo/>.

<sup>20</sup> Russell T. Vought, Director, Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget, letter to the Hon. Susan B. Collins, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, May 2, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Fiscal-Year-2026-Discretionary-Budget-Request.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), "2/ The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities spent \$808,748 on a study 'Racial Justice Activism Intervention to Address Structural Racism and Prevent Depression in Black and Latinx Youth' Nearly a million dollars for pure leftist activism," X, December 4, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1864505545542995970](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1864505545542995970).

“Leveraging social media to promote body positivity among Latinx adolescents.”<sup>22</sup> The director should find out which bureaucrat approved or oversaw these studies.

- The National Library of Medicine spent \$161,999 on “Queering the Curriculum: Preparing Family Medicine and Other Primary Care Residents to Care for Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender Diverse People.”<sup>23</sup> It also published an observational study on its website entitled “Psychosocial Functioning in Transgender Youth after 2 Years of Hormones.”<sup>24</sup> This promotion of gender ideology resulted in the deaths of two participants when they committed suicide.<sup>25</sup>
- The National Institute of Mental Health spent \$23,634 on “Measuring event-level intersectional stigma among gender diverse youth.”<sup>26</sup>
- The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases spent \$611,203 on Evaluating Microaggressions among Latinx Individuals with Obesity.”<sup>27</sup>
- The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality spent \$142,182 on “Using telehealth to improve access to gender-affirming care for BIPOC and rural gender diverse youth.”<sup>28</sup>

### **The John E. Fogarty International Center: A Rogue Woke Weapon**

Of all the institutes and centers at NIH, the John E. Fogarty International Center for Advanced Study in the Health Sciences is likely the best example of how woke ideology can infiltrate and capture an institution. President Lyndon Johnson created the Fogarty International Center by executive order to advance the National Institutes of Health’s mission by supporting and

---

<sup>22</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), “1/ Let’s take a look at how the government is spending your money. 🇺🇸 The NIH spent \*\$135,701\* on a study about ‘Leveraging social media to promote body positivity among Latinx adolescents’ with goal of the ‘promotion and acceptance of diverse body sizes and appearances,’” X, December 4, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1864504486523179101](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1864504486523179101).

<sup>23</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), “4/ The National Library of Medicine spent \$161,999 on ‘Queering the Curriculum: Preparing Family Medicine and Other Primary Care Residents to Care for Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender Diverse People’ They’re spending thousands on woke activism and calling it medicine,” X, December 4, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1864507020088381833](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1864507020088381833).

<sup>24</sup> Diane Chen et al., “Psychosocial Functioning in Transgender Youth after 2 Years of Hormones,” *National Library of Medicine* 388, no. 3 (January 2023): 240–50, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36652355/>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), “5/ The National Institute of Mental Health spent \$23,634 “Measuring event-level intersectional stigma among gender diverse youth,” X, December 4, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1864508324642791485](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1864508324642791485).

<sup>27</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), “3/ The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases spent \$611,203 ‘Evaluating Microaggressions among Latinx Individuals with Obesity’ Read that again,” X, December 4, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1864506029909610843](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1864506029909610843).

<sup>28</sup> Wokal Distance (@wokal\_distance), “6/ The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \$142,182 ‘Using telehealth to improve access to gender-affirming care for BIPOC and rural gender diverse youth,’” X, December 4, 2024, [https://x.com/wokal\\_distance/status/1864508860494401755](https://x.com/wokal_distance/status/1864508860494401755).

facilitating global health research conducted by the United States.<sup>29</sup> But the center mainly uses this mandate to promote “global health equity.”<sup>30</sup> The center has funded many initiatives that advance the left’s woke agenda, including the following:

- “Designing an Ethnodrama Intervention Addressing PrEP Stigma Toward Young Women”<sup>31</sup>
- “Using latent class analysis to understand the role of layered stigma on engagement in care among HIV positive women who use drugs in Ukraine”<sup>32</sup>
- “Reducing Intersectional and HIV Stigma among High Risk Women who use Drugs in Kazakhstan, Central Asia: A Multilevel Stigma Resistance and Enacted Stigma Reduction Intervention for Women and Providers”<sup>33</sup>

The center has also funded projects supporting transgenderism, such as “stigma reduction and gender affirmation to promote HIV prevention testing in Filipino trans women.”<sup>34</sup> Recently, Congressman Andy Ogles (R-TN) announced his team’s discovery that the center has been quietly funding research on the “stigma of being a transgender African woman overseas.”<sup>35</sup> In February, Congressman Brandon Gill (R-TX) introduced a bill to abolish the Fogarty Center.<sup>36</sup> The Republican majorities in the House of Representatives and the Senate should prioritize the elimination of NIH’s most woke center.

---

<sup>29</sup> Sean Moran, “Exclusive: Rep. Brandon Gill Proposes to Abolish \$95 Million ‘Woke’ Fogarty International Center,” February 7, 2025, *Breitbart*, <https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2025/02/07/exclusive-rep-brandon-gill-proposes-to-abolish-95-million-woke-fogarty-international-center/>.

<sup>30</sup> National Institutes of Health, “Fogarty International Center (FIC),” updated August 7, 2025, <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/nih-almanac/fogarty-international-center-fic#:~:text=The%20center%20focuses%20on%20promoting%20global%20health,and%20addressing%20health%20challenges%20that%20transcend%20borders.>

<sup>31</sup> National Institutes of Health, Fogarty International Center, “Designing an Ethnodrama Intervention Addressing PrEP Stigma Toward Young Women,” accessed August 14, 2025, <https://www.fic.nih.gov/Grants/Search/Pages/stigma-hiv-aids-r01tw012673.aspx>.

<sup>32</sup> National Institutes of Health, Fogarty International Center, “Using Latent Class Analysis to Understand the Role of Layered Stigma on Engagement in Care among HIV Positive Women Who Use Drugs in Ukraine,” accessed August 14, 2025, <https://www.fic.nih.gov/Grants/Search/Pages/stigma-hiv-aids-r21tw011060.aspx>.

<sup>33</sup> National Institutes of Health, Fogarty International Center, “Reducing Intersectional and HIV Stigma among High Risk Women who use Drugs in Kazakhstan, Central Asia: A Multilevel Stigma Resistance and Enacted Stigma Reduction Intervention for Women and Providers,” accessed August 14, 2025, <https://www.fic.nih.gov/Grants/Search/Pages/stigma-hiv-aids-r01tw012405.aspx>.

<sup>34</sup> Office of Congressman Brandon Gill, “Rep. Gill’s Bill Abolishes Woke and Wasteful Government Center,” press release, February 7, 2025, <https://gill.house.gov/media/press-releases/rep-gills-bill-abolishes-woke-and-wasteful-government-center>.

<sup>35</sup> Rep. Andy Ogles (@RepOgles), “🇺🇸 My team just uncovered that a rogue NIH division—the Fogarty Center—has been quietly funding perverse research on the ‘stigma’ of being a transgender African woman overseas. You are paying for this filth. In February, I joined @RepBrandonGill , @RepMTG , @RepEricBurlison , @RepNancyMace , and @TXRandy14 in backing legislation to abolish the Fogarty Center once and for all. Congress can end this TODAY. Share this far and wide,” X, August 7, 2025, <https://x.com/RepOgles/status/1953480585130750324>.

<sup>36</sup> Office of Congressman Brandon Gill, “Rep. Gill’s Bill Abolishes Woke and Wasteful Government Center.”

## **Conclusion**

The NIH has strayed from its core mission of conducting impartial biomedical research and has become a vehicle for promoting woke ideologies. By allocating taxpayer funds to projects prioritizing DEI and controversial research such as gain-of-function studies, the NIH has eroded public trust and weaponized its influence to serve ideological ends rather than promote public health. The Trump administration has taken significant action to restore the original focus of the NIH, but Congress can make these reforms permanent and ensure that no future administration can pollute the mission of an agency dedicated to protecting public health. If Congress fails to do so, then the Trump administration's work could be swept away by a future left-wing administration.