VIA FAX
December 5, 2003

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Ambulatory Pediatric Association, American Pediatric Society, Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs, and Society for Pediatric Research, we write today to express our support for the continuation of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) merit-based peer-review system – a strong, sound process of the highest integrity which has made countless improvements to the health of infants, children and adolescents worldwide.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 57,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. The Ambulatory Pediatric Association, American Pediatric Society, Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs, and Society for Pediatric Research represent full time academic and clinical faculty responsible for the training of pediatricians, pediatric researchers, and the leadership of medical school pediatric departments. As pediatricians, we are acutely aware of the need for and the necessity of ongoing research and discovery to the health of the nation, including children. This research, which has helped so many, would not be possible without the support of NIH.

Qualified scientists from around the world, who volunteer their time to evaluate proposals for their significance, approach, and innovation, carefully assess the research and study environment and review every study proposal submitted to the NIH. Only research proposals of the highest caliber scientific merit receive support with federal funds. This peer-review process is rigorous, and it ensures that the studies selected for funding are meritorious and are awarded without bias toward a field of study, a particular research institution, or the ideology of researcher.

Recently, the peer-review process, for studies conducted in the field of behavioral and human development, has come under extraordinary scrutiny. Such unprecedented close scrutiny threatens to politicize the process, endanger the meritorious nature of the studies, undermine the unbiased scientific approach, and compromise spirit of discovery.

We urge your continued support of the scientific peer-review process as it currently exists at NIH

Sincerely,

Carden Johnston MD, FAAP
President, American Academy of Pediatrics

Paul Darden, MD, FAAP
President, Ambulatory Pediatric Association

Gail J. Demmler, MD, FAAP
President, Society for Pediatric Research

Larry Shapiro, MD, FAAP
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Debra H. Fiser, MD, FAAP
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