

Opening Statement
Chairman Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on the NIH – A Review of Its Reforms, Priorities, and
Progress
June 21, 2012

(As Submitted for the Record)

On behalf of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, I would like to welcome Dr. Collins and thank you for coming here today to discuss the National Institutes of Health. The advancement of science and research is absolutely critical and translates into better outcomes for patients. NIH is a vital institution and continues to be at the forefront of medical discoveries in the US and around the world.

The NIH supports research through its own scientists and via grants on a wide variety of issues, including basic biomedical science, behavioral science, and specific diseases and conditions. Many members, including myself, are curious to hear how NIH determines its research priorities and why some diseases receive significant attention and funding while others don't seem to be on the NIH's radar. Or, how NIH selects topics in behavioral research and whether these topics reflect the best science and common values.

For example, finding hope for those who suffer from rare diseases is a priority for the Subcommittee and especially for the families who care for children with rare diseases. Creating research consortia is a way to focus on these diseases, such as Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), that is the leading genetic cause of death in infants and toddlers.

The NIH has also undergone some major changes in recent years. I look forward to hearing Dr. Collins thoughts on what has worked for the agency, what needs further thought, and how Congress can best help.