

NIH Staff Demand NIH and HHS Leadership Uphold NIH Mission in “Bethesda Declaration”

The Bethesda Declaration raises concern over pressure to implement measures that harm the public.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, June 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Federal employees at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have stood up for the health and safety of the American people and faithful

stewardship of public resources, demanding HHS and NIH leadership uphold the mission of the NIH “to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability.” The [Bethesda Declaration](#), addressed to Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, Secretary Kennedy, and members of Congress who oversee the NIH, raises concern over pressure to implement measures that harm the public. The document outlines how recently enacted policies interrupt ongoing clinical trials and patient care, public health monitoring, critical research, and early career scientist training programs.

NIH Staff say that because of termination of essential employees, politicization of research, and funding cuts they are unable to uphold their commitment to the NIH mission, the American people, and their ethical charge as scientists. Despite fears of retaliation, the Bethesda Declaration has been signed by over 300 NIH Staff including 92 staff who signed their full name.

“Standing up in this way is a risk, but I am much more worried about the risks of not speaking up. If we don’t speak up, we allow continued harm to research participants and public health in America and across the globe. If we don’t speak up, we allow our government to curtail free speech, a fundamental American value.” says Jenna Norton, PhD, MPH, NIDDK Program officer and one of the lead organizers of the Declaration.

Experts say the abrupt changes to the NIH threaten the ecosystem of the biomedical advancement. “The partnership between NIH and the academic community has made huge contributions to the almost every aspect of health of people across the US. Since January, the NIH staff have been forced to focus on issues other than the noble NIH mission. A large group of public servants have found the courage to speak out and say ‘Enough. Let us get back to our



important work.”, says Jeremy M. Berg, PhD, Former Director, National Institute of General Medical Sciences.

“It has been soul destroying to witness the politicization of research resulting in mass termination of grants that are in progress and doing well. It violated my Hippocratic oath,” says one NIH employee who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation.

[Stand Up for Science](#) is hosting the Bethesda Declaration and a letter of [support](#). They are asking the public to join with them in supporting these federal employees by signing their open letter. Current supporters include Nobel Laureates, prominent scientists, politicians, activists, patients, and more.

According to Colette Delawalla, MA, MS, founder and executive director of Stand Up for Science, “These NIH employees have devoted their lives to civil service—they care deeply about the public. This is why they are courageously holding NIH and HHS leadership accountable. We are honored they have trusted us with this act of resistance and welcome any such future collaborations with other groups.”

At this historic moment, Stand Up for Science calls on the members of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee who will be soliciting testimony from NIH Director Dr. Jay Bhattacharya Tuesday at 10am to seek his commitment of support for NIH staff members signing the Bethesda Declaration.

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We have 5 current NIH employees who are willing to go on record (and several who are willing to speak on conditions of anonymity), available for interview. For security reasons, we have not listed them in this release, but welcome interested parties to contact Media@standupforscience.net.

Colette Delawalla (Founder and Executive Director) is available to discuss the impact of this action on the broader effort to save science, call to action for the public, and encourage other federal agency employees to do the same.

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