



No Health without Mental Health
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June 25, 2024

Dr. Monica Bertagnolli
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Re: Input re the NIMH Director Search

Dear Dr. Bertagnolli,

It is with respect and a record of longstanding collaboration with NIH/NIMH that NHMH – No Health without Mental Health (NHMH), joined in by the undersigned behavioral health organizations, offers the following recommendations regarding your search for a new Director of NIMH. NHMH was formed in 2007 with a mission to make effective evidence-based behavioral health (MH/SUDs) care available in medical settings. We are a leader in the behavioral health integration in primary care space. We have engaged and worked with a succession of past NIMH Directors including Drs. Tom Insel, Bruce Cuthbertson and Joshua Gordon. In June 2017 we helped instigate and organize, along with NIMH and SAMHSA, a first of its kind virtual federal-level conference on integrated care, the HHS Federal Partners Integrated Care Meeting – State of the Art: Research, Models, Promising Practices and Sustaining Integrated Care (see attached).

We offer the following recommendations regarding your search for a new NIMH Director:

- * Needed now is a new Director who does not focus solely or mainly on the potential 'cure' for mental health and substance disorders, but also on how best to provide better access and quality care services to people who have these illnesses.
- * The new Director should be someone who can engage with other medical fields to enhance overall whole person care for people given the complexities of these illnesses and their co-morbidities and consensus need for comprehensive, coordinated, interdisciplinary care.
- * Of paramount importance, the new Director should be someone who understands and encourages input from patients, families, caregivers and the behavioral health advocacy community in developing interventions to alleviate the burden of these illnesses.
- * Health services delivery research must be a priority for the new Director who should address past inadequate funding of the NIMH's Services & Intervention Research (SIR) division. In the NIMH 2022 budget, 50% was allocated to biologic and genomic research and a mere 8-9% allocated to services research. Improving our health delivery system so that current known treatments are actually implemented in our complex delivery system has been largely ignored by NIMH in the past. It is vital the new Director recognize the impact of the organization,

financing, and delivery of health services on those with MH/SUDs conditions including quality measures across medical fields that use patient-reported outcomes (PROs).

* NIH should consider diverse candidates and those with lived experience.

Thank you for considering these recommendations. If you would like further information or would like to discuss further please contact Florence Fee at florencefee@nhmh.org.

With best regards,

Florence C. Fee, J.D., M.A. Executive Director
NHMH – No Health without Mental Health

Mark Dunn, Director of Public Policy
National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers

E. Clarke Ross, D.P.A., Public Policy Director
American Association on Health & Disability

Laura W. Groshong, LCSW, Director Policy & Practice
Clinical Social Work Association

E. Clarke Ross, D.P.A., Washington Representative
Lakeshore Foundation

Paul N. Samuels, J.D., Director/President
Legal Action Center

Marie G. Dyak, CEO/Executive Director
Entertainment Industries Council

Reyna Taylor, Senior Vice President, Public Policy
National Council on Mental Wellbeing

Eric Buehlmann, Deputy Executive Director for Public Policy
National Disability Rights Network

Joy Burkhard, Executive Director
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health