



July 29, 2020

The Honorable Francis Collins, MD, PhD
Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

The Honorable Diana Bianchi, MD
Director
Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
National Institutes of Health
Building 31
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Director Collins and Director Bianchi:

We write to ask the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to prioritize research focused on the impact of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) on children and adolescents.

While preliminary evidence suggests children are less vulnerable overall to the virus than other age groups, there is still more to be researched as demonstrated by recent reports of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) linked to the novel coronavirus.

Given the critical nature of this pandemic, we urge the NIH to commit to an appropriately focused SARS-CoV-2 pediatric research agenda that builds on projects like the previously announced HEROS study exploring rates of infection between children with asthma and those without asthma. In addition to HEROS and the recently announced study to evaluate the efficacy of SARS-CoV-2 therapies on children that will be supported by the Pediatric Trials Network, we are asking the NIH to propose and submit a comprehensive COVID-19 pediatric and adolescent research agenda and to consider:

- A nationwide and appropriately powered longitudinal study looking at the near, mid, and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on children's health, including complications that may arise in the years to come.
- Research into how children in different communities have been affected by COVID-19, including Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) and research into what, if any, racial, ethnic, geographic, or other disparities have emerged in both testing and treatment for COVID-19 and the possible causes of and solutions for reducing these health disparities.

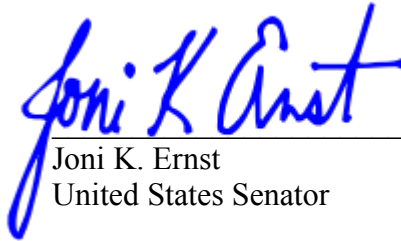
- Studies seeking to understand the risk and protective factors children may produce against COVID-19 antigens.
- Research exploring the social, emotional, and behavioral challenges linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the impacts of social distancing, time out of the traditional school setting, stress as a result of parent or guardian job loss and other economic challenges, and the traumatic impact of substance abuse by both children and parents or guardians.
- Identification of the basic research needs focused on how the novel coronavirus impacts on children and adolescents.
- Research and clinical trials focused on developing precision therapies or vaccines for COVID-19 focused specifically on children and adolescents.

Thank you for your leadership during this pandemic and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator