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AAU, AAMC, COGR Among Groups Opposing HHS Fetal Tissue Research Ban

A group of nearly 100 organizations, including the Association of American Universities (AAU), Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), and the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR) have signed a letter to HHS Secretary Alex Azar expressing their “collective and strong opposition” to a new policy announced last month placing restrictions on research using human fetal tissue. On June 5, HHS announced it was allowing a grant with the University of California San Francisco to expire and would not allow the conduct of intramural fetal tissue research that requires “new” acquisition of tissue. Additionally, an “ethics advisory board” will be convened to review “new extramural research grant applications or current research projects in the competitive renewal process (generally every five years) that propose to use fetal tissue from elective abortions and that are recommended for potential funding,” HHS said. NIH has not yet established the board.

“The ethical considerations fall heavily in favor of permitting fetal tissue research, conducted in accordance with longstanding federal rules,” the groups wrote July 11. “The new restrictions on NIH intramural research using fetal tissue and the new redundant ethics reviews for extramural research will disrupt important biomedical research and delay the development of new treatments for patients.” Some members of Congress also oppose the moves. The House passed an amendment prohibiting the future use of funds to implement some parts of the new policy. Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., chair of the Oversight and Reform Committee, and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., ranking member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, “sent a July 17 letter seeking clarification from Sec. Azar regarding the department’s scientific rationale for the new policy,” AAMC reported in an advocacy update on July 19.

[Link to letter, AAMC update](#)

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