May 14, 1966

Hon. Lister Hill  
United States Senate  
New Senate Office Building  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Hill,

It is with considerable regret that I find it impossible to testify before your committee on May 16 because of a previous engagement of long standing involving many people.

As a member of the advisory council of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases I have come to know the national needs for research in the fields covered by this Institute, involving both the extramural and intramural programs.

In my judgment, the crucial question that needs to be examined and answered by your committee is why this Institute, as well as the other National Institutes of Health, is once again asking you - and through you the American people - for an increased appropriation to fulfill its assigned mission. Your committee has undoubtedly been informed that approximately 40 per cent of all new research grant applications received by this Institute are rejected by the study sections for lack of scientific merit, and that of those that are approved at least 25 per cent cannot be paid because funds are not available. The larger number of research grant applications is a direct consequence of the training programs that have brought much-needed new talent into the field of medical research and education. When so large a proportion of scientifically valid applications must be turned down for lack of funds, this nation is deprived of the special talents and skills that have been developed at such great cost to meet the challenge of the many unsolved, serious problems affecting the nation's health. Moreover, since medical facilities cannot be maintained and expanded without adequate opportunities for research, and since our extraordinary growth of population - an estimated additional 150 million more people in the next 35 years - calls for a continuing expansion in both size and number of our medical schools, we must be prepared
to meet the research needs of an evergrowing number of investigators in the medical centers of our nation.

I am sure that others will testify regarding the important problems in acute and chronic respiratory disease, in the search for drugs to combat the many viral infections that cannot be controlled by vaccination, in the continuing struggle for a better understanding and ultimately better control of the allergies, in the search for knowledge that may make organ transplantation as much of a practical reality as blood transfusions are now - to name but a few of the many disease problems that are a source of current human misery.

Of the various intramural activities of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, I am particularly familiar with the work of the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases and the extraordinarily important contributions the scientists of this Laboratory are continuing to make especially in the field of acute respiratory disease and in the studies that have a bearing on the possible role of viruses in human cancer. They work in an overcrowded building with physical facilities that are both unsuitable and inadequate for the work they have to do. To achieve their mission they have been forced to rent space away from the Institute and to engage personnel by contract with other institutions at a cost that is much greater than if they could have all the space and people they need in their own laboratories. The talents of the senior people now working in the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases are such that in addition to the work now in progress, they are especially suited to develop new coordinated programs in the fields of infectious hepatitis and rheumatoid arthritis, but this they cannot do in their present quarters. There is, in my judgment, an urgent need for a new physical plant for this important intramural activity of this institute.

I hope very much that my comments may be useful in your deliberations, and that your decisions for the future will be as helpful to the progress of medical research and education in this country as those you have made in the past. With deep appreciation for your efforts, I am,

Cordially yours,

Albert B. Sabin, M. D.
Distinguished Service Professor of Research Pediatrics

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