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Hawaii Attorney General Joins Multistate Coalition Pushing for Scientific and Medical Research Funding During COVID-19 Pandemic

HONOLULU — Hawaii Attorney General Clare E. Connors today joined a coalition of 22 attorneys general in sending a letter to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) and its National Institutes of Health (NIH) urging them to reject recent recommendations made by the Trump Administration’s NIH Human Fetal Tissue Ethics Advisory Board (Board). The Board’s recommendation would withhold federal funding for fetal tissue research grant proposals, putting limits on research into possible treatments and therapies for various health conditions, including COVID-19. The recommendation comes after a two-year campaign by the Trump Administration to block federally funded research using fetal tissue as well as an Executive Order to ban the research.

“The recommendations aren’t based on science, and would delay and hinder medical research that could profoundly improve health conditions for our community,” said Attorney General Connors. “Having a biased board that meets almost entirely in private is highly problematic and indicates a foregone recommendation.”

Fetal tissue has been an essential part of scientific and medical advances that have saved millions of lives in the United States and across the globe. Fetal tissue was used in the research that led to the poliovirus, rubella, measles, and rabies vaccines. It remains a crucial part of vital biomedical research.

In their letter, the coalition argues the Board was not fairly balanced in terms of viewpoint, as two-thirds of its members are on record opposing abortion, fetal tissue, or both. The Board’s proceedings also lacked transparency. All of its meetings were in closed session except for one virtual meeting held for less than an hour. The attorneys general urge NIH Director Francis S. Collins and HHS Secretary Alex M. Azar II to use their authority to reject the Board’s recommendations and maintain federal funding for research projects that have already been recommended for funding using fetal tissue.

In sending the letter, Attorney General Connors joins the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia.

A copy of the letter is available [here](#).

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