

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 6, 2025

News Release

Universities of Wisconsin, UW–Madison, UW-Milwaukee leaders and faculty discuss impact of federal health research funding on Wisconsin

MADISON, Wis.—From lifestyle recommendations that will help fight off Alzheimer’s disease symptoms to job creation to economic growth, Universities of Wisconsin, UW–Madison, and UW-Milwaukee leaders and faculty today discussed the importance of federal research funding on the people and communities of Wisconsin.

The remarks came at a news conference Thursday in the wake of a federal proposal to limit National Institutes of Health funding.

Sterling Johnson, a professor of medicine at UW–Madison, said his team’s research into Alzheimer’s seeks to diagnose the disease years before people even develop symptoms and identify ways to slow disease progression. The NIH-funded research involves more than 1,700 Wisconsin adults and has identified steps people can take to combat Alzheimer’s, including exercise, good sleep, and nutrition.

"Through NIH funding, we are working together to create solutions faster that meet public needs," Johnson said. "With Alzheimer’s, we don’t have the luxury of time."

Karyn Frick, distinguished professor of psychology at UW-Milwaukee, is studying how the loss of estrogen at menopause may affect the development of Alzheimer’s disease in women, who are more likely than men to be affected. Her NIH-funded research is designed to develop new treatments to help reduce memory loss and the risk of Alzheimer’s in both women and men.

"Federal funding for basic and clinical research is critical for training new scientists and health professionals while developing new treatments for devastating neurological diseases," Frick said. "Simply put, these desperately needed treatments would not be possible without NIH funding."

Johnson and Frick were joined by Universities of Wisconsin President Jay Rothman and UW–Madison Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin along with Tom Still, president of the Wisconsin Technology Council, and Nicolas Paris, chair of the board of directors of BioForward and CEO of Gilson Inc.

A participant in the Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer’s Prevention (WRAP) study, Sigrid Knuti, also spoke, saying that with a family history of Alzheimer’s she was “counting on” researchers like Johnson to discover cures and treatments for the disease.

"I'm a mother, and a grandmother, and I want this generation to end Alzheimer's. For that, I'm counting on Sterling and the University of Wisconsin to get it done," she said.

Rothman cited the important research at UW–Madison, UW-Milwaukee and across the Universities of Wisconsin and said cutting federal funding "has real implications for families and communities counting on us to find solutions to our most pressing needs."

Chancellor Mnookin emphasized that indiscriminate reductions in research funding "pose significant risk to our state and nation's future" and harm the ability for universities like UW–Madison to make critical, life-saving discoveries and train students to be leaders.

"Let us work together to protect and preserve the vital research work around us that is poised to make critical new discoveries and save lives in Wisconsin and all across the nation," she said.

Media may view a video recording of the news conference here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO6abwieszk>

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