

# TELEGRAM & GAZETTE

## UMass Chan Medical School leader: NIH cuts are 'profound and sobering'

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[Henry Schwan](#), Worcester Telegram & Gazette

WORCESTER — A top official at UMass Chan Medical School is warning that cuts to biomedical research by President Donald Trump's administration will have a “profound and sobering impact.” Dr. Michael F. Collins, the medical school’s chancellor, sent a memo Sunday to the school community that painted a troubling picture for research institutions in the wake of announced cuts in funding by the National Institutes of Health.

The federal agency will cap indirect research costs at 15% on all new and existing grants, Collins' memo said. Indirect costs underpin research, paying for expenses like lab space, salaries and utilities.

“The new cap, which takes effect Feb. 10, represents a significant change to the way biomedical research at UMass Chan and hundreds of other recipient organizations has been funded for decades,” said Collins.

The NIH announced the cuts could save billions by trimming administrative costs to focus on direct scientific research.

“The United States should have the best medical research in the world. It is accordingly vital to ensure that as many funds as possible go towards direct scientific research costs rather than administrative overhead,” the NIH said in its announcement. “This rate will allow grant recipients a reasonable and realistic recovery of indirect costs while helping NIH ensure that grant funds are, to the maximum extent possible, spent on furthering its mission.”

According to the NIH, \$9 billion of the \$35 billion it spent on research nationwide in fiscal year 2023 was allocated to overhead, or indirect costs. With the cap cut from 30% to 15%, the agency said it expects to save over \$4 billion a year.

Elon Musk, tasked by Trump to cut government waste, said on his social media platform X the amount universities have been spending on overhead is a “rip-off.”

Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell is one of 22 attorneys general suing the Trump administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the NIH to stop the cuts.

“Massachusetts is the medical research capital of the country. We are the proud home of nation-leading universities and research institutions that save lives, create jobs, and help secure a better future,” said Campbell in a statement. “We will not allow the Trump Administration to unlawfully undermine our economy, hamstringing our competitiveness, or play politics with our public health.”

The lawsuit claims a violation of the Administrative Procedure Act, including a step taken by Congress in Trump's first term to head off cuts in research reimbursements. The act makes it illegal for the NIH to make indiscriminate changes to indirect costs.

Most NIH-funded research happens outside of federal government institutions at public and private universities and colleges. In fiscal year 2024, more than 200 Massachusetts organizations received roughly \$3.5 billion in NIH funding to support 5,783 research projects.

Gov. Maura T. Healey and Sen. Ed Markey blasted the effort to cut NIH funding, with Markey calling it a "targeted attack on Massachusetts."

The 15% cap is approximately one-quarter of the indirect cost rate at UMass Chan, said Collins. Since the school received information about the cuts Friday, meetings have included the school's legal team and the state's congressional delegation to determine next steps.

Advocacy efforts are planned to stop the cuts, said Collins, that include the Association of American Medical Colleges, Research America and many university and patient advocacy groups.

“Be assured that we are doing all that we can to protect our most vital and valuable public research mission and to try to prevent the negative impacts and disruption that such a decision would have on our research enterprise,” said Collins.

UMass Chan received roughly \$200 million in research funding from the NIH in fiscal year 2024, according to UMass Chan. The school's departments that received the largest share of funds included anatomy and cell biology (\$40.2 million), internal medicine/medicine (\$35.1 million) and genetics (\$21.2 million).

The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, which provides financial support to numerous local health initiatives, does not receive any state or federal funds, said Amie Shei, the nonprofit's president and chief executive officer.

She said the NIH cuts could have a "chilling effect" that could lead to a loss of jobs.

"It will have long-term implications for the future workforce, future investments, and more immediately institutions will be impacted financially and some may have to make reductions to workforce and programs," she said. "There could be negative impacts that haven't been fully thought through."

*Reporter Margie Cullen contributed to this report.*

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