

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the Director of the National Institutes of Health to make awards to outstanding scientists, including physician-scientists, to support researchers focusing on pediatric research, including basic, clinical, translational, or pediatric pharmacological research, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Ms. ERNST introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the Director of the National Institutes of Health to make awards to outstanding scientists, including physician-scientists, to support researchers focusing on pediatric research, including basic, clinical, translational, or pediatric pharmacological research, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Pediatricians Accel-  
5 erate Childhood Therapies Act of 2021” or the “PACT  
6 Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. TRANS-NIH AWARDS FOR EARLY-CAREER PEDI-**  
2 **ATRIC RESEARCHERS.**

3 Part G of title IV of the Public Health Service Act  
4 (42 U.S.C. 288 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end  
5 the following new section:

6 **“SEC. 489A. TRANS-NIH AWARDS FOR EARLY-CAREER PEDI-**  
7 **ATRIC RESEARCHERS.**

8 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the NIH shall  
9 make awards to outstanding scientists, including physi-  
10 cian-scientists, to support early-career researchers focus-  
11 ing on pediatric research, including basic, clinical,  
12 translational, or pediatric pharmacological research.

13 “(b) PRIORITY RESEARCH POPULATIONS.—In car-  
14 rying out subsection (a), the Director of NIH may  
15 prioritize the issuance of awards to applicants who—

16 “(1) are individual researchers presenting quali-  
17 fying applications and representing populations that  
18 have been historically underrepresented in pediatric  
19 medical research, including women and underrep-  
20 resented racial minorities; or

21 “(2) are institutions of higher education that  
22 are eligible to receive funds under part A or B of  
23 title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, part  
24 A or B of title V of such Act, or subpart 4 of part  
25 A of title VII of such Act, or research institutions  
26 partnering with such institutions of higher education

1 to offer programs to support early-career pediatric  
2 researchers.

3 “(c) PRIORITY RESEARCH TOPIC AREAS.—In car-  
4 rying out subsection (a), the Director of NIH, in consulta-  
5 tion with the Director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Na-  
6 tional Institute of Child Health and Human Development  
7 and the directors of other national research institutes and  
8 national centers that participate within the Trans-NIH  
9 Pediatric Research Consortium, shall—

10 “(1) establish priority research topic areas, in-  
11 formed by external stakeholders, including research  
12 institutions, research societies, patient organizations,  
13 and industry; and

14 “(2) consider opportunities to align such pri-  
15 ority pediatric research topic areas with current and  
16 future priorities of the National Institutes of Health,  
17 including—

18 “(A) pediatric and adolescent mental and  
19 behavioral health, including addiction medicine;

20 “(B) childhood cancer;

21 “(C) precision medicine, genetics, and  
22 genomics;

23 “(D) rare diseases and disorders, such as  
24 sickle cell disease, and other diseases and dis-

1 orders with significant unmet training needs;  
2 and

3 “(E) fetal, placental, and neonatal develop-  
4 ment.

5 “(d) REQUIREMENTS.—The Director of NIH—

6 “(1) shall require recipients of awards under  
7 this section to use such awards to support pediatric  
8 research activities, including costs associated with  
9 laboratory staff and other costs associated with the  
10 conduct of research; and

11 “(2) may allow recipients of awards under this  
12 section to use such awards for costs associated with  
13 receiving guidance and training from senior re-  
14 searchers and mentors, as necessary to help such re-  
15 cipients reach a state of research independence, in-  
16 cluding conferences and other meeting participation.

17 “(e) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.—Awards made  
18 under this section shall be used to supplement, and not  
19 supplant, other funding for pediatric research and career  
20 development awards.”.

21 **SEC. 3. TRANS-NIH PEDIATRIC CONSORTIUM.**

22 Title IV of the Public Health Service is amended by  
23 inserting after section 409D (42 U.S.C. 284h) the fol-  
24 lowing new section:

1 **“SEC. 409D-1. TRANS-NIH PEDIATRIC CONSORTIUM.**

2       “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Director of NIH shall  
3 establish and maintain a consortium to be known as the  
4 Trans-NIH Pediatric Research Consortium (in this sec-  
5 tions referred to as the ‘Consortium’) to coordinate pedi-  
6 atric research programs across the National Institutes of  
7 Health.

8       “(b) MEMBERSHIP.—The members of the Consor-  
9 tium shall consist of representatives of multiple national  
10 research institutes and national centers.

11       “(c) CHAIR.—The Chair of the Consortium shall be  
12 the Director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National In-  
13 stitute of Child Health and Human Development (or the  
14 Director’s designee).

15       “(d) DUTIES.—In coordinating pediatric research  
16 programs across the National Institutes of Health, the  
17 Consortium shall—

18               “(1) establish pediatric research priorities;

19               “(2) identify gaps and opportunities for re-  
20 search collaborations involving multiple national re-  
21 search institutes and national centers; and

22               “(3) identify opportunities to develop the next  
23 generation of pediatric researchers.

24       “(e) CONSULTATION.—The Consortium shall consult  
25 regularly with external experts in the field of pediatric re-

1 search, including children’s hospitals, children’s research  
2 institutions, patient organizations, and other stakeholders.

3 “(f) REPORTING.—Beginning one year after the date  
4 of enactment of the Pediatricians Accelerate Childhood  
5 Therapies Act of 2021 and every 2 years thereafter, the  
6 Consortium shall submit to Congress, and make publicly  
7 available on the website of the National Institutes of  
8 Health, a report on—

9 “(1) any research project involving pediatrics  
10 and involving more than one Institute or Center that  
11 was supported during the review period;

12 “(2) any strategic initiatives that include a sig-  
13 nificant pediatric component;

14 “(3) career development awards for early-career  
15 researchers focused in pediatrics, including specific  
16 numbers of awards and amount of funding, made  
17 during the review period;

18 “(4) details on the composition of awards for  
19 early-career researchers, including demographic de-  
20 tails indicating the proportion of recipients from  
21 populations that have been underrepresented in pedi-  
22 atric medical research; and

23 “(5) such other information as the Director of  
24 NIH determines appropriate.”.