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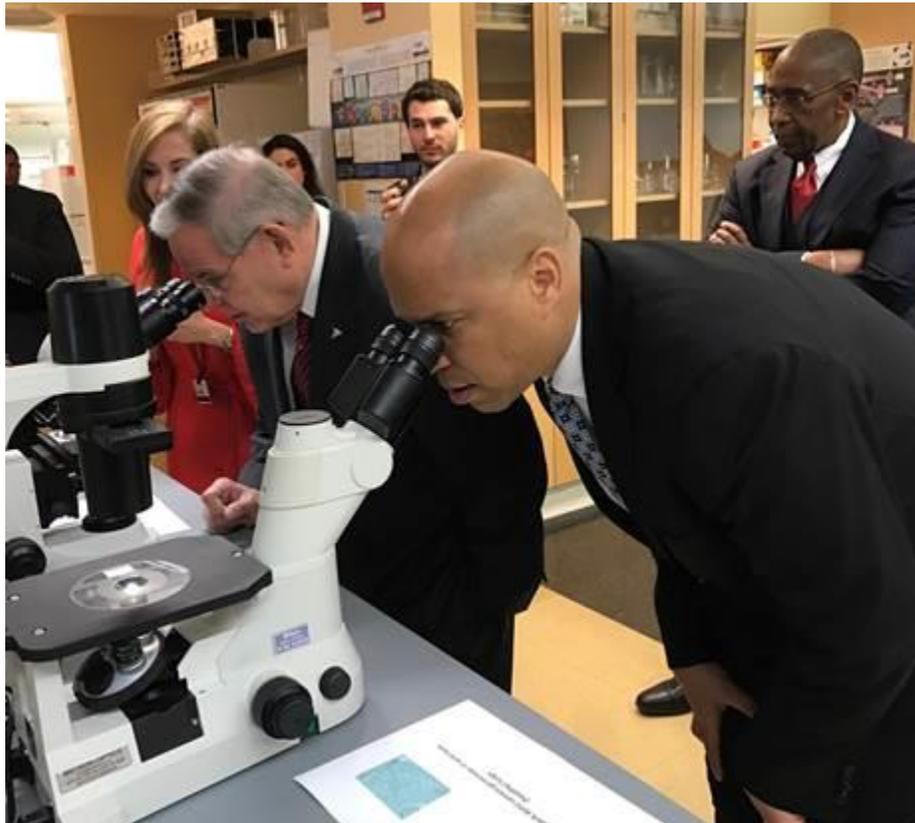
*****VIDEO/PHOTO RELEASE*****

**Menendez, Booker Tour Rutgers Infectious Disease Lab,
Announce New Medical Research Funding**

NEWARK, N.J. – U.S. Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker today toured the Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) Institute for Infectious and Inflammatory Diseases in Newark, where cutting-edge, federally-funded research is underway to develop new cures and treatments for infectious and immune diseases, to announce new funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), despite efforts by the Trump Administration to severely slash federal investments in vital research that will unlock the next medical breakthrough, support our local research institutions, and create jobs and economic opportunity. The senators also spoke to a gathering of medical students and faculty whose important work is backed by NIH funding.

“Our state is a hotbed for innovation in medical research, clinical trials, pharmaceuticals, and world-class health care. These advancements begin with America’s commitment to funding research at institutions like Rutgers. Bringing discoveries out of the lab and into people’s medicine cabinets is a long, expensive process, **said Sen. Menendez**. “That’s why federal funding for medical research from agencies like the National Institutes of Health is so vital. It’s what keeps scientists on the job, searching for answers long before ideas become profitable. It’s not enough to pray for cures – we must invest in them. The breakthroughs of tomorrow will come from labs like those we toured today.”

“The incredible work happening at Rutgers is helping to ensure that New Jersey remains a beacon of innovation and a global leader in medical breakthroughs,” **said Sen. Booker.** “We need an all hands on deck approach to address the epidemic of neglected diseases of poverty and to fight health disparities in some of our most underserved communities. Federal investment in research and innovation isn’t just the fiscally responsible thing to do, it’s the right thing to do.”



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The omnibus federal spending bill, recently passed by Congress and signed into law, included an additional \$3 billion in NIH funding, with increases for every NIH institute and center to support investments that advance science and speed the development of new therapies, diagnostics and preventive measures, improving the health of all Americans. Also included is \$500 million dedicated to opioid research, \$1.8 billion for study into Alzheimer’s, \$140 million for the BRAIN initiative, and \$50 million to combat antimicrobial resistance.

President Trump’s proposed budget drastically cut NIH funding by \$1.2 billion for the remainder of 2017 and \$5.8 billion in cuts in 2018

In 2016, New Jersey received \$240 million in NIH funding, with Rutgers receiving a large portion of that money, which helps support the school’s mission as a premiere research institution, while creating jobs and economic opportunities within the state’s robust biopharmaceutical industry.



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“Sens. Menendez and Booker played a crucial role in securing urgently-needed NIH funding so that our scientific investigators can continue performing critical biomedical research,” **said Dr. Robert Johnson, dean of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School.** “Without their commitment to maintaining and increasing this funding, much-needed advances in areas such as brain health, infectious and inflammatory disease, cardiovascular disease, cancer, immunology and a host of other diseases would never occur.”

“NIH has been critical in making the U.S. the world leaders in biomedical research and has provided the essential foundation needed for the recent development of new and effective treatments and therapeutics for a variety of diseases. We at New Jersey Medical School are proud to have successfully competed for over \$50 million in NIH funding,” **said Dr. William Gause, the director of the Center for Immunity and Inflammation.**

The senators got a firsthand look at the work of Dr. William Gause, the director of the Center for Immunity and Inflammation, and his research team at the crossroads of infectious disease and the inflammatory response. Specific NIH-funded projects examine the immune response that occurs during parasitic, fungal, bacterial, and viral infections, with specific principal investigators focused on each of these pathogens.

The researchers are also exploring the fundamental causes of inflammatory diseases including ulcerative colitis, metabolic disorders, Crohn's disease, and inflammatory skin diseases are all being investigated. Many of these diseases share common immune disorders which are being targeted for novel therapies and treatments. New, molecular-based diagnostics are being developed to quickly identify harmful infectious agents before they can disseminate in the body or spread in the population.

The Institute for Infectious and Inflammatory Diseases—or i3D for short—brings together basic and clinical research that translates recent laboratory discoveries into effective treatments for infectious and inflammatory diseases. This area of research is particularly important given the appearance of emerging and reemerging pathogens like Zika and Ebola in New Jersey and worldwide. New diagnostics, treatments, and prevention programs are needed to control the spread and impact of these and related diseases.

More than \$30 million in highly competitive NIH funding currently supports research efforts in i3D, representing one of the best funded areas of biomedical research in the state. As such, RBHS recently recognized infectious and inflammatory diseases as a signature area of research excellence, and in 2016 formed the RBHS Institute for Infectious and Inflammatory Disease. More than 100 faculty members within i3D currently conduct state-of-the-art translational research in a variety of areas including infectious diseases, Crohn's disease, obesity, diabetes, sepsis, prosthetic implants, and more.

Sen. Menendez, a senior member of the Finance Committee that oversees federal health policy, was the recipient of the [2017 Champion of Health Care Innovation Award from the American Life Sciences Innovation Council \(ALSIC\)](#), in part for his career-long advocacy for the NIH and investments in vital medical research. He [visited the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey last year to highlight the potential impact of Trump's proposed NIH cuts](#). In 2016, he met with a team of [Rutgers University researchers developing a revolutionary Alzheimer's treatment](#). Sen. Menendez has also authored [legislation to refocus NIH efforts to discover new treatments and a cure for Tourette Syndrome \(TS\)](#).

The senators were also joined on the tour by Drs. Gause, Dean Robert Johnson of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School; Mark Siracusa, a chancellor scholar and assistant professor in the Center for Immunity and Inflammation; Karen Edelblum, researcher who was diagnosed at 13 with Crohn's disease; and Amariliz Rivera-Medina, whose work focuses on achieving a better understanding of how the immune system recognizes and fights infection.

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