

My name is Martina Parigi. I am a research associate working in a stem cell biology lab at Rockefeller University. I am currently finishing my postdoctoral project and am in the process of applying for faculty positions, ideally in New York City.

The skin is the body's largest organ and a physical shield protecting us from environmental stressors. To keep this barrier intact, skin stem cells and immune cells need to communicate with each other and coordinate their activity. When this communication is broken, the skin becomes more susceptible to infections, cancer and chronic inflammatory disorders such as psoriasis or dermatitis. Skin conditions affect millions of people worldwide. They cause tremendous physical suffering for patients — including chronic pain, infection risk, and increased susceptibility to certain cancers — and carry an enormous economic cost in direct medical expenses and lost productivity. By understanding how skin stem cells and immune cells coordinate to maintain a healthy barrier, my research aims to identify new therapeutic strategies that could prevent infections, reduce chronic inflammation, lower long-term healthcare , and improve quality of life for millions of people.

Basic science projects, especially involving the study of viral infections or vaccination were severely affected by the instability of federal funding. Existing grants had been frozen, and several funding agencies have cancelled their funding programs, especially for early career investigators, such as career development mechanisms like the NIH Pathway to Independence Award (K99/R00) As a postdoctoral researcher preparing to apply for faculty positions, I am experiencing this uncertainty firsthand. This funding instability has profound repercussions on the availability of positions offered by universities with several departments experiencing hiring freezes, and positions I might have applied for are simply not available, I now have to consider whether building my career in this state — or even in this country — is viable if research support remains unstable. Stable funding environments elsewhere become increasingly attractive, not because I want to leave, but because long-term career security, and the opportunity to build a sustainable research program depend on it. Continued instability risks pushing highly trained scientists like me to seek opportunities where research is treated as a long-term investment rather than a short-term uncertainty.

Having funds administered at the state level offers a unique and timely opportunity to stabilize and strengthen support for basic science and the academic positions which are at the root of scientific progress and drive long-term innovation. New York State houses some of the most prestigious, productive and innovative research centers and universities in the country. Together, these institutions support thousands of high-skilled jobs, attract substantial federal and private research funding, and support biotechnology, pharmaceutical, and healthcare innovation across

the state. Lending support to these institutions during times of federal uncertainty is an investment in the future. Short-term support for researchers and faculty positions can help universities retain talented scientists, keep laboratories operating, and maintain research progress. Each faculty position supports trainees, research staff, and the broader academic community. Sustained investment also helps ensure that New York remains competitive in attracting research funding and scientific talent. Supporting these institutions now is not simply symbolic — it helps preserve jobs, protect prior public investment in scientific training, and maintain the state's long-standing leadership in medical and scientific research.

Thank you,

Martina