

My name is Amanda Ackermann. I am a Ph.D. student researcher in a cancer biology laboratory at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. I was born and raised in Queens, NY, and was a recipient of the STEM Incentive program. This allowed me to go to SUNY Stony Brook with free tuition, and in reimbursement I worked for five years in a STEM field in NY. I was more than happy to continue to work within NY in STEM, as the opportunities in NY were the best in the country.

This motivated me to begin graduate studies at the Icahn School of Medicine in Mount Sinai and stay in NY for a scientific career. At Mount Sinai I am developing a preclinical model for a rare and deadly skin cancer in a lab entirely funded by the NIH. The disruption in NIH funding within the last year has greatly impacted my ability to contribute to the pipeline of preclinical model development, wasting thousands of tax dollars.

These experiments are critical to developing targeted drug therapies that can spin off into biotech companies, and increase revenue. Not only that, it shook my faith in my career in science in NY. Now that I know how unstable and politicized funding can be at the federal level, I plan to look for postdoctoral research opportunities in places that can supplement loss of funding from the NIH, like California and Texas. Already I see from my colleagues a brain drain to other countries and states where funding is more assured.

Supplementing federal funding with training grants in NY are vital to keeping the NY workforce in science strong, and prevent waste in these experiments that are vital to human health. I urge the Economic Development committee to consider matching the investments being made by other states across the country in biomedical research, so that early-career researchers like myself do not have to choose between furthering our ability to do science, and our ability continue living and working in New York - which has already made such a significant investment in us and our careers.