



1230 YORK AVENUE · NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 23, 1978

Honorable Edward I. Koch  
Mayor of the City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Mayor Koch:

Dr. George K. Hirst, Director of the **Public Health Research Institute** of the City of New York, has written to me about the particular predicament of the institute in the course of the well-known fiscal upheavals of the city. I am told that there is a serious possibility that the city may decline to renew its contract with the Institute, after 1981, although I believe that all that is in question at the present time is the continued provision of laboratory facilities. According to Dr. Hirst, the Institute would look to other sources, doubtless primarily the National Institutes of Health, for general operating expenses.

It will be some time before I am sufficiently attuned again to the numerous problems of municipal affairs to be able to offer a considered judgment about the priority of choices that your office must make. Nor, in any case, is it clear to me whether there would be any significant expense whatever to the city in the renewal of the contract under the terms aforementioned. What comes from looking at the balance sheet, nevertheless, is that the net expense is very small indeed and particularly in relation to the formidable scientific reputation and accomplishments of the Institute's staff. The record of personalities and of scientific contribution of the Institute, in its history and at the present time, can only be described as illustrious and remarkable for an organization of that size. It would be a lamentable loss indeed, especially given the leverage on total available funding that the Institute offers, if a quite modest investment to secure its future has to be terminated!

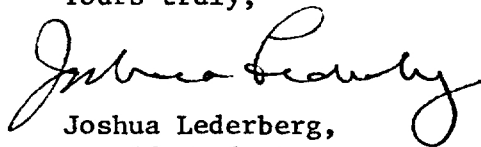
Since, in a certain sense, the Institute can be regarded as a competitor, operating in a similar domain to that of The Rockefeller University, I could only offer these words on the basis of considered appreciation for the scientific caliber of the work that the Institute has performed. Competitor or not, it will be a great loss to all of us if the city is unable to retain the intellectual vitality that makes it such a worthwhile community, in spite of the calamities of every day's newspapers.

Your administration must of course make the final choice in weighing values and costs; what I can offer is the considered judgment that the

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Institute is one of the most scientifically fruitful organizations for its size and expense that could be found anywhere in the world.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joshua Lederberg".

Joshua Lederberg,  
President-designate  
The Rockefeller University

JL/gel