

Collins Asks OMB To Revamp Proposed Grant Rule, Extend Comment Period

Jul 7, 2026, 6:12 PM EDT

(Inside Health Policy)

Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) is asking the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to revamp its controversial proposed rule that gives political appointees a larger role in grantmaking, saying it would inappropriately politicize scientific and medical research. Collins is also asking OMB to extend the comment period to 90 days, which she says would provide stakeholders more time to weigh in on what could be significant changes to the federal funding process.

The proposed OMB rule, "Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance," would allow for easier grant terminations and give more oversight to President Donald Trump's political appointees, who would have the power to apply independent judgment while reviewing research grants at agencies across the government. Critics of the rule say the shifting of responsibilities compromises the peer review process, as the Trump administration has already disrupted and revoked funding it deems supportive of "diversity, equity and inclusion" principles.

In a letter to OMB director Russell Vought, Collins wrote that the rule would undermine government funding of merit-based research by accentuating political goals.

Collins said the 45-day comment period isn't sufficient given the far-reaching changes on the table, asking for at least 90 days and for Vought to remove portions of the rule she said would "unduly burden scientific and biomedical research and small communities."

Among her concerns, according to the letter she published Monday (July 6), are the potential administrative impositions on research institutions. The proposed rule calls for federal financial assistance award recipients to justify every payment request, which Collins said would be especially difficult for small communities that may need to hire more staff to keep track of funding.

Collins also pointed to changes to grant termination processes, which include allowing federal agencies to cancel grants that aren't acting on the administration's priorities. An appeals process for compliance-based terminations would also be difficult as federal agencies would no longer be subject to administrative hearing requirements.

“Authorizing mid-award termination of Federal awards, with limited ability to appeal, would inject uncertainty into the Federal award process, especially for awards that span multiple years and phases and make these awards more costly,” Collins said. “For example, the termination of clinical trials would leave patients without treatment and could well result in significant scientific and financial losses to both the recipient and the Federal government.”

Another concern from Collins is the reliance on Trump’s priorities, and whether changes to grant review from the administration and federal agencies would supersede Congress’ power to appropriate federal funding.

The tentative changes, which could take effect in October, have received more than 82,000 comments in the docket since the rule was published in May. The comment period is set to end in six days.

A group of 126 lawmakers is opposing the OMB rule, writing to Vought that the rule would delay and disrupt work at National Institutes of Health, the world’s largest funder of health research. Political appointees, they added, rarely have experience in science and would decide on grants with minimal transparency or explanation of their decisions.

“President Trump’s sacking of thousands of NIH researchers and scientists has led to severe understaffing and grant approval delays at NIH. This rule change would make an already problematic situation disastrous,” the group wrote in a June letter.

The group is led by Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) and Rep. Lori Trahan (D-MA).