Sequestration — it’s not just an obscure policy term. It refers to the across-the-board cuts to the federal budget that will deeply affect members of our community.

I am a research professor and chair of the Department of Anatomical Sciences and Neurobiology at the University of Louisville. Our department, which contributes significantly to the teaching mission of the School of Medicine, is also the home of several world-class scientists that study many aspects of the brain and spinal cord function.

This work provides the foundation that we hope will one day lead to successful treatment of many developmental and degenerative diseases that affect our senses and mental health, as well as our ability to recover from traumatic brain and spinal cord injury. Funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is essential to improve health outcomes for the more than 100 million Americans who suffer from brain-based diseases and disorders. NIH is also the cornerstone of a robust economy. Across the U.S., sequestration cuts to NIH are estimated to result in 30,000 fewer jobs and a $4.5 billion decrease in economic activity.

In Kentucky, NIH grants provided $156.3 million in funding and supported 3,680 jobs in 2011. Our senior senator, Republican leader Mitch McConnell, is in a unique position to affect the outcome of the debate on sequestration. It is important for the health and economy of Kentucky as well as the nation, that Sen. McConnell takes a strong stance to avert sequestration, which threatens to cut $2.5 billion from the NIH budget.

The NIH is the world’s premier biomedical research entity, providing funding to thousands of institutions across the country to advance science. Every family in America has been touched by illness or disease. Sen. McConnell can stand up for those families by advocating a fiscal policy that continues the tradition of broad bipartisan support for biomedical research.

WILLIAM GUIDO, Ph.D.

Louisville 40205