



**Commonwealth Health Research Board**  
P.O. Box 1971, 101 N. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Richmond, Virginia 23218-1971  
804.371.7799 Telephone 804.692.0222 Fax [www.chrb.org](http://www.chrb.org)

**PRESS RELEASE Dated July 2024**

**From the Commonwealth Health Research Board**

*Chair*

*Robert W. Downs, Jr.,  
M.D.  
Richmond, VA*

The Commonwealth Health Research Board (CHRB) announced its new officers for 2024/2025: Robert W. Downs, Jr., M.D., has been re-elected to the position of Chair and Francis X. Farrell, Ph.D. has been elected to the position of Vice Chair.

*Vice Chair*

*Francis X. Farrell,  
Ph.D.  
Roanoke, VA*

Dr. Downs received his undergraduate and medical school degrees from Duke University. He completed an internship and residency at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri from 1974 to 1976 and then served as a Research Associate and Clinical Associate at the National Institute of Arthritis, Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIADDK) from 1976 to 1983, when he joined the faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine. Dr. Downs is currently retired with an appointment as Professor Emeritus of the Internal Medicine/Endocrinology faculty at VCU School of Medicine and continues to serve as Deputy Editor for the Journal of Women's Health. Dr. Downs's career spanned over 40 years focusing on osteoporosis diagnosis, prevention, education, and treatment, including clinical trials of new drugs for the management of osteoporosis and prevention of fractures.

*Members*

*Neelam Azad, Ph.D.  
Yorktown, VA*

Dr. Downs was appointed to the CHRB by the Governor to serve a term of five years ending March 31, 2020, and was reappointed to serve another five-year term ending March 31, 2025.

*Thomas W. Eppes,  
Jr., M.D.  
Lynchburg, VA*

*Andrew F. Kohler,  
M.D., M.B.A.  
Woodbury, CT*

Dr. Farrell graduated James Madison University with a Bachelor of Science degree, Biology and received his Doctor of Philosophy degree, Biochemistry from the Virginia Commonwealth University, Medical College of Virginia in 1990. He began his career with the Johnson and Johnson Family of Companies with RW Johnson Pharmaceutical Research Institute; and later with Centocor /Janssen Research and Development with both positions focusing on drug discovery/ early development for multiple disease areas including anemia, chronic kidney disease, immune disorders and tissue fibrosis. Dr. Farrell is currently the Leader of the Carilion Clinic Department of Research and Development which supports over 135 sponsored clinical trials and 40 grant programs. He also serves as an Assistant Professor of Medicine at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. Dr. Farrell is a research administrator and educator with experience in multiple therapeutic areas and possesses the ability to bridge the gap between laboratory bench and clinical science.

*Ethlyn McQueen-  
Gibson, D.N.P.  
Hampton, VA*

*Rawle Seupaul, M.D.  
Roanoke, VA*

*Administrators*

*Erin E. Sprouse, CPA  
Anne C. Pace, MPA*

Dr. Farrell was appointed to the CHRB by the Joint Rules Committee to serve an unexpired term ending March 31, 2026.

*Scientific Consultants*

*Raya Mandler, Ph.D.*

*Merrill Mitler,  
Ph.D.*

*Arnold Revzin, Ph.D.*

*Charles Selden, Ph.D.*

The CHRB was created by Virginia Code §32.1-162.23 to provide financial support, in the form of grants, donations, or other assistance, for research efforts that have the potential of maximizing human health benefits for the citizens of the Commonwealth. Research efforts eligible for support by the Board include traditional medical and biomedical research relating to the causes and cures of diseases as well as research related to health services and the delivery of health care. Since its inception in 1999, the CHRB has funded 306 research grants totaling approximately \$26.6 million. The CHRB encourages collaborative research efforts among two or more institutions or organizations, gives priority to those research efforts where Board support can be leveraged to foster contributions from federal agencies or other entities, and supports both new research efforts and the expansion or continuation of existing research efforts. CHRB grant recipients - for grant awards life-to-date - have leveraged over \$78 million in additional private and federal grant funds to further their research studies.