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By Theresa Defino

◆ Beginning Oct. 1, Renee Wegrzyn will be the first permanent director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H), the new HHS agency modeled after the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) for which Wegrzyn formerly worked, President Joe Biden announced Sept. 12. Since August 2020, she has been vice president of business development at Ginkgo Bioworks, a biotech firm focused on cell programming based in Boston. Wegrzyn, who has a Ph.D. in applied biology from the Georgia Institute of Technology, was the program manager in DARPA's Biological Technologies Office from April 2016 until joining Ginkgo Bioworks. Acting Deputy Director Adam Russell has led ARPA-H since May 25.

"I am deeply honored to have the opportunity to shape ARPA-H's ambitious mission and foster a vision and approach that will improve health outcomes for the American people, including President Biden's Cancer Moonshot," Wegrzyn said in a statement released by Ginkgo Bioworks. "Some of the problems we face every day—especially in health and disease—are so large they can seem insurmountable. I have seen firsthand the tremendous expertise and energy the U.S. biomedical and biotechnological enterprise can bring to solve some of the toughest health challenges. ARPA-H will create the transformative and collaborative space that is required to support the next generation of moonshots for health—not only for complex diseases like cancer, but also systemic barriers like supply chain gaps and equitable access to breakthrough technologies and cures for everyone." (9/15/22)

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