



April 3, 2019

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On behalf of Research!America, the nation's largest not-for-profit alliance advocating for science, discovery, and innovation to achieve better health for all, I urge you to sign the letter Senator Richard Burr and Senator Bob Casey are circulating in support of robust Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Each second of each day, Americans lose loved ones to illnesses we can conquer...if we deploy research. Today, cancer will take another 1,600 Americans from us. Nearly one third – 30% – of children born with a rare disease will not live to see their fifth birthday. Young people with the eating disorder anorexia nervosa have a ten times higher risk of dying than their peers. The median life expectancy for an individual with sickle cell disease is 47 years. The median life expectancy for an individual with Duchenne muscular dystrophy is 26 years.

More than five million Americans – comparable to the combined population of New Hampshire and Iowa – are living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.

These statistics are difficult to take in, because they are not just statistics, they are people. People we know. People we love. That is why we must fight harder.

The fundamental research NIH supports and conducts has had a dramatic, positive impact. Coupled with private sector-driven medical discovery, we are witnessing unimagined progress against many of the diseases and conditions noted above, and new knowledge is being uncovered every day that lays the groundwork for lifesaving breakthroughs. That work must not only continue; we must work faster. Time costs lives. Research saves them.

Americans want the United States to invest in research. They want faster medical progress, and they want our nation to do more to drive it. According to a national survey Research!America commissioned in January, 76% of Americans believe it is important for Congress and the President to assign a high priority to faster medical progress. As it stands, our nation spends about 5 cents of each health dollar on research to prevent, cure and treat disease. Some 63% of Americans say that this level of investment is not enough, an 11 percentage point increase from just last year.

241 18th Street South
Suite 501
Arlington, VA 22202

P 703.739.2577

F 703.739.2372

E info@researchamerica.org

Please lend your leadership and your voice to fueling faster medical progress by signing the Burr/Casey letter. The text of the sign-on letter and contact information, as provided by Senator Casey's office, is provided below.

Thank you and your respective staff members for the role you have already played in championing faster medical and public health progress, and for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Mary Woolley
President and CEO, Research!America

Contacts for sign-on letter: Stephanie DeLuca (Stephanie_deluca@casey.senate.gov); Angela Wiles (Angela_Wiles@help.senate.gov)

Text of Letter:

“Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

As you and your colleagues begin to work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 appropriations bills, we respectfully request that you maintain a strong commitment to funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education bill. In 2016 the NIH saw its largest funding increase in a decade, and in the three years since, Congress has provided for additional funding through the 21st Century Cures Act. In FY 2019, members from both parties agreed to further invest in biomedical breakthroughs beyond the previous year's levels. We commend the Appropriators for recognizing the critical role support for the NIH plays in spurring continued discoveries that will save and improve lives. We believe that it is essential to continue this federal support because of the potential health benefits for all Americans and the importance of ensuring that our Nation remains at the forefront of medical research.

The NIH is our country's premier institution for biomedical innovation, supporting research in all fifty states. It offers our best hope for treating or curing debilitating diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and so many other illnesses that American families battle every day. It is through the innovative medical research supported by the NIH that we may have a chance to contain the increasing health care costs associated with the aging of the Baby Boomer generation. Projected increases in health care expenditures in the coming decades are largely due to demographic changes and the escalating costs associated with medical conditions that cost the federal government and private sector hundreds of billions of dollars each year.

Our investment in the NIH has yielded an unprecedented number of scientific advances that have improved health outcomes and contributed significantly to the Nation's economic growth. NIH grants fund basic medical and translational research that turns bench-side findings into bedside interventions for patients. Unfortunately, America has struggled to maintain its position as the

world leader in research and development, and researchers have similarly struggled to secure funding. As NIH grants become more competitive, researchers can easily spend half their careers working before receiving a grant. Secure NIH funding allows scientists to do what they do best – discover tomorrow’s therapies and cures; preventing promising, talented young researchers from leaving the field of biomedical research; and ensuring seasoned investigators do not abandon scientific research altogether or conduct their research outside the United States. We hope that the renewed commitment to NIH funding will help reverse these troubling trends.

We all recognize the difficult choices that need to be made with respect to the budget as we seek to reduce the deficit. As we continue to grapple with emerging threats, and if we are to continue improving the health of Americans and the quality of their lives, we must continue to invest in biomedical research that has the potential to save money, improve lives, and offer an economic return for our Nation. We urge you to consider the tremendous benefits of sustained investment in the NIH, and ask you to remember our Nation’s role as a world leader in biomedical research and the impact this research has on patients as your Committee makes funding decisions for FY 2020. We also ask that you include the full allocation of funding for the NIH provided by the 21st Century Cures Act. Investing in research today will yield cures and therapies for patients tomorrow.

Sincerely,”