Testimony of Research!America to the Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Concerning Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations for FDA
Submitted for the Record, May 26, 2021
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Research!America appreciates the Subcommittee’s stewardship over funding for such critical federal agencies as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The Research!America alliance advocates for science, discovery, and innovation to achieve better health for all and we hope the comments below prove useful as you allocate funding for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22). We urge you to support a robust increase of no less than $200 million above FY21 levels to non-user fee funding to FDA in FY22.

The ever-increasing list of public health responsibilities that FDA fulfills directly affects the health and safety of Americans. Overall, FDA oversees more than $2.8 trillion in products, which account for 20 percent of annual spending by U.S. consumers. In 2020, FDA once again demonstrated a solid commitment to evaluating the safety and effectiveness of new products in as efficient a manner as possible, approving 53 novel drugs, 58% of which treat rare or orphan diseases. FDA is working collaboratively with patients, academic researchers, and industry to responsibly speed the review of medical advances, knowing that any unnecessary delay squanders health and time.

The need for efficient and nimble review of new medical products and therapies has been on full display during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the critical need for therapies for this novel disease, the FDA created the Coronavirus Treatment Acceleration Program (CTAP), which uses innovative methods to move COVID-19 treatments to patients as quickly and as safely as possible. Thanks to this innovative program, the FDA has authorized 10 COVID-19 treatments and 3 vaccines to date. Even while meeting this important need, the FDA has not wavered in its commitment to its other health priorities. Of the 53 drugs approved for a range of medical conditions, 75% were approved in the U.S. before any other country. FDA’s role is too important, across a myriad of American priorities, for inadequate federal support.

Increased funding for the FDA will allow this agency to continue in its many critical functions: developing new strategies for ensuring food safety across America, including deploying pioneering artificial intelligence programs; assessing the safety of new drugs and medical devices coming to market; ensuring that Americans have access to the highest quality therapeutics when they need them; and working together with other agencies to handle epidemics and pandemics, including the ongoing COVID-19 response, as well as potential future threats.
Additional funding would also allow FDA to do even more to address other urgent national health priorities, including using drug regulation, enforcement, and education to combat the persistent and deadly opioid crisis; approving safe and effective therapies for illnesses like Alzheimer’s disease, which affected as many as 5.8 million Americans in 2020; curbing the use of harmful tobacco products; and supporting initiatives to eliminate antimicrobial resistance, a major public health issue that is reducing the efficacy of antibiotics.

Americans recognize that our nation cannot afford to retreat in the face of these and other health threats. Since 1992, Research!America has commissioned national and state-level surveys to gauge public sentiment on issues related to research and innovation. According to a national survey we commissioned in 2021, more than 75% of Americans say that opioid abuse is a problem in their communities. FDA is responsible for ensuring prescription drugs are safe for users and has made addressing the opioid crisis a key priority. The same 2021 survey found that 70% of Americans believe the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that major changes, including more funding, are needed in our public health systems. FDA has played a major role in combating the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to be a vital part of preparing for future pandemics and other public health threats. We cannot win the battle against the opioid crisis or against future pandemics unless FDA has the resources necessary to fulfill these crucial responsibilities to protect public health.

Given FDA’s growing portfolio of responsibilities that bear on the health, safety, and wellbeing of the American people, we believe the Subcommittee would be advancing the best interests of our nation by supplying FDA with an increase of at least $200 million in budget authority.

I thank you and your respective staff for your hard work, your leadership in funding FDA, and for considering Research!America’s views.

Sincerely,

Mary Woolley
President and CEO
Research!America