March 12, 2019

I am writing on behalf of Research!America, a not-for-profit advocacy and public education alliance committed to faster medical and public health progress. We appreciate the pivotal role you play in advancing the health, prosperity, and security of the American people. In that context, our alliance urges you to be a leading champion in Congress for two urgent imperatives:

1) passing bipartisan legislation to finally relegate to history the four-times repudiated “sequestration” budget caps; and

2) investing in medical, public health and scientific research at a time in our history when need and opportunity converge to underscore the strategic importance of this investment.

**Raise the Caps**

Unless the 116th Congress acts on behalf of the American people to replace a series of budget caps that were never meant to be triggered (they were written into the 2011 *Budget Control Act* as a “stick” to prompt entitlement reform), defense and non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending will be cut by approximately $71 billion and $55 billion respectively in FY20. Cuts of this magnitude would preclude Congress from sustaining, much less advancing, progress against a host of health, economic and security threats such as the opioid crisis, bioterrorism and cyberterrorism, the staggering human and fiscal impact of diseases like Alzheimer’s, and faltering US leadership in the global R&D arena. As other nations out-invest -- and attract R&D talent and business away from -- the U.S., the prospects for our nation’s sustained global economic competitiveness dim. **We strongly urge Congress to work on a bipartisan basis to secure a budget deal that raises the FY20 and FY21 caps on defense and NDD spending.**

**Invest in R&D**

To fight health threats that affect us all and advance science that benefits us all, we request **robust increases for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for**
Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) among your FY20 appropriations priorities. Whether measured in quantitative or qualitative terms, the return on these assets for our health and economic security dwarfs our nation’s investment in them.

The cost of illness, both in terms of tax dollars and the havoc they wreak on the lives of patients and their loved ones, far surpasses the cost of investing in research that can prevent, treat, and eradicate disease. The research NIH funds delivers health, fiscal, and economic benefits that endure and multiply; knowledge gained now becomes the foundation for further progress. As it stands, NIH is able to fund just 20% of the meritorious grant proposals received. The determination of federal policymakers from both sides of the aisle to rebuild the NIH budget has helped restore a decade of lost purchasing power. To keep up that momentum and gain the upper hand over diseases that rob us of time, independence and loved ones, we urge you to increase funding for NIH by at least $2.5 billion in FY20.

We also request you provide at least $7.8 billion to fund CDC in FY20. As diseases such as Ebola and Zika have shown, public health threats do not respect borders, and in our increasingly globalized world, we are more vulnerable than ever to emerging, deadly infectious diseases. CDC’s work is also pivotal to overcoming the opioid epidemic, which is claiming close to 100 Americans each day, and addressing antimicrobial resistance, which is undermining the effectiveness of crucial antibiotics. Our nation’s public health infrastructure is as important to a secure and prosperous future for our nation as is the repair of our roads and bridges; reinvestment in CDC is not just desirable; it is imperative.

Our request for at least $460 million in funding for AHRQ in FY20 is conservative relative to the potential benefit of the life- and cost-saving health services research (HSR) our nation squanders each year by underfunding this strategically important agency. Rising health care costs place our fiscal future at risk, yet we fail to fully deploy HSR to remedy costly inefficiencies in our healthcare system. One example of many: AHRQ-funded research is key to addressing medical errors. The agency’s efforts have produced tangible progress against these deadly errors, saving tens of millions of dollars and countless lives, but budget erosion limits the scope and reach of these efforts.

We respectfully request at least $3.4 billion to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The ever-growing list of public health responsibilities FDA fulfills has far-reaching implications for the health and safety of Americans. FDA is responsible for overseeing more than $2.4 trillion in products – which account for 20 percent of annual spending by U.S. consumers. The agency’s ability to meet its responsibilities bears on our global economic competitiveness over the short- and long-term. FDA’s role is simply too important, across too many American objectives, for inadequate federal support.
Finally, we request at least $9 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF). The NSF is a crucial engine for our nation’s R&D leadership, funding strategically important research at more than 1,800 academic institutions in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories. NSF-funded research underlies bedrock industries like IT and biopharmaceuticals, informs efforts to thwart cyber- and other forms of terrorism, and in a plethora of other ways protects and advances the nation’s interests.

The noncommercial R&D that is financed by NSF, NIH, and the other key federal agencies across the non-defense and defense realm, coupled with robust private-sector innovation, is a formula for advancing U.S. objectives that other nations have embraced with increasingly impressive results. In fact, as China and other competitor nations intensify their R&D investment, our nation must recommit to R&D leadership or risk flagging economic competitiveness and influence in the global arena.

The central role these agencies play in advancing the best interests of America and its citizens speaks to a larger truth: our nation’s future prosperity, security and global influence hinge on a commitment to deploy R&D and advance other key priorities and assets funded through the discretionary portion of the federal budget. As an esteemed Member of Congress, you will be instrumental in determining whether, going forward, our nation reinforces or undervalues and depletes the discretionary portion of the federal budget. We urge you to protect and bolster this crucial facet of federal spending. We firmly believe anything less will undercut our nation’s potential and jeopardize its future.

Thank you for navigating these challenging waters on the nation’s behalf, and for considering Research!America’s views.

Sincerely,

Mary Woolley
President & CEO