

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2011

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Capitol, Room S-128  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Capitol, Room S-146A  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, and Education, and Related Agencies  
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 131  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, and Education, and Related Agencies  
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 156  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye, Vice Chairman Cochran, Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

As you and your colleagues prepare the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 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. We believe that it is essential to continue support for medical research 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 medical research. It offers our best hope for treating or curing debilitating diseases like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and so many other illnesses that American families battle every day. It is also our best hope for containing the increasing health care costs associated with the aging of the Baby Boomer generation. A large portion of the projected increase in health care expenditures in the coming decades can be anticipated due to demographic changes and the escalating costs associated with many medical conditions and chronic diseases.

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 is losing ground as the world leader in research and development and researchers are struggling to secure funding. As NIH grants get more competitive, researchers can easily spend half their careers working before receiving a grant, resulting in promising, talented young researchers being discouraged from biomedical research and some young investigators deciding to abandon scientific research altogether or to conduct their research outside the United States.

We all recognize the difficult choices that need to be made as we seek to reduce the deficit. If we are to improve the health of Americans and the quality of their lives, we must continue to invest in areas like biomedical research that have the potential to save money in the future, improve the lives of Americans, and offer an economic return for our Nation. We urge you to consider the tremendous benefits of sustaining 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 FY 2012 funding decisions. Investing in research today will yield cures and therapies for patients tomorrow.

Sincerely,

  
Bob Casey, Jr.

