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May 15, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Mikulski, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairman Harkin and
Ranking Member Moran:

On behalf of Research!America and its more than 350 member organizations
representing patients and other committed advocates for U.S medical
progress, I write to thank you for taking on the enormously important and
profoundly difficult task of allocating finite funding to a spectrum of
American priorities.

As you consider how best to shepherd the strengths and values that have
distinguished our nation since its birth in 1776, among them

- the belief in an unrivaled national defense;
- the commitment to individual freedom;
- the determination to drive human progress and foster the American
Dream through ingenuity, entrepreneurialism, and community; and
- the unflagging commitment to positioning our nation as a leader,
never a follower

we make a straightforward request: Do not let longer-term initiatives and
proposals, as important as they are, divert from reasserting American
priorities now.

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How does this relate to medical progress? Federal funding is lower now than it was in 2010 for the noncommercial medical research conducted at research universities and other research institutions around the country. Private sector medical innovation relies on this fundamental discovery, and medical innovation:

- arms our nation against increasingly sophisticated bioterrorism threats;
- protects our troops and empowers wounded warriors;
- is an engine for the export leadership needed to maintain our nation's global economic leadership;
- spurs U.S. business and job creation; and
- is the most effective weapon in our nation's arsenal for defeating deadly and disabling diseases that ultimately cause profound suffering for every single American – both patients and loved ones.

Medical progress does not serve one national priority, it serves many.

Despite their profound, longer-term importance, please do not let policy initiatives aimed at optimizing the efficiency of the research pipeline or identifying supplemental funding streams for medical research overshadow the immediate opportunity to accelerate medical progress through robust FY 15 allocations to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Patients cannot afford the wasted time implicit in withholding funding from the research pipeline while it is essentially “audited.” Accountability is critical, but so is medical progress. Demanding one should not preclude the other.

We need medical progress now, and fiscal year 2015 gives you a chance to reinvigorate it. Children are dying, deprived of their futures. Parents are dying, unable to participate in their child's lives. Wounded warriors are dying, faced with the impossible choice between unremitting PTSD and suicide. And that does not begin to catalogue the lost years and needless suffering that research can put a stop to...if Congress and the White House adhere to our nation's historic commitment to medical progress. The pause in advancing this American priority has gone on long enough. Please capitalize on the FY 15 appropriations process to save American lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ellie Dehoney". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Ellie Dehoney
Vice President, Policy and Advocacy
Research!America