



October 19, 2015

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The Honorable Lamar Alexander
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Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

I am writing on behalf of Research!America, a nonprofit alliance of patient advocacy organizations, universities, academic health centers, industry, scientific societies, and independent research institutions committed to advancing health through research. We are grateful for the extraordinary level of dedication and hard work you, your colleagues on the HELP Committee, and the staff supporting your efforts have displayed in crafting the Innovations for Healthier Americans initiative. Our goal in writing you today is two-fold: to urge inclusion of mandatory funding for NIH and FDA in this legislation, and to offer our support and assistance as you work to ensure the Committee completes its consideration of the initiative this year.

Research!America appreciates how meaningful it is that the Committee would work to provide a funding boost in concert with policy changes in order to increase the speed and productivity of the discovery, delivery, development continuum, and we believe your efforts truly can usher in a new era of faster medical progress. Over the past several years alone, the root causes of more than 4,000 diseases have been identified. Bolstering our research dollars over the next five years is a strategy not only for increasing that number, but for capitalizing on these findings, building out the knowledge base and bridging to private sector development of urgently needed medical advances.

The dramatic potential to uncover new “leads” in human health does not stop there. There is untapped potential across a spectrum of research disciplines, and discovery in one arena can be transformative in another. Basic research funded through the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) on a rare disease called Cherubism uncovered one of the most promising leads in years against rheumatoid arthritis. In 2013, the U.S. paid a total of \$6.4 billion on treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, a cost which is expected to increase to \$9.3 billion by 2020.

Our nation need not abide the level of human suffering and the weight of healthcare costs that attend health conditions we can conquer. A funding boost for NIH will empower our nation to fight harder and find answers faster. The logic for mandatory FDA funding is equally straightforward. If FDA is given additional responsibilities without additional resources, the stage will be set for slowdowns, not faster speeds, in the review of new medical products. Neither patients nor taxpayers can afford this worst case scenario.

Finally, Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray, we hope you will call on our alliance if we can assist in any way as you work to complete the first iteration of the Innovations initiative and move it through the committee process. Our alliance includes experts across the life science ecosystem, and we are fully committed to assuring that time does not dissipate the momentum behind this effort. We believe that in partnership with Representatives Upton and DeGette, you will successfully drive faster medical progress and save lives.

Sincerely,

Mary Woolley
President and CEO

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