



August 20, 2020

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*on leave of absence

241 18th Street South
Suite 501
Arlington, VA 22202
P 703.739.2577
F 703.739.2372
E info@researchamerica.org

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the Research!America alliance, thank you for your determined, bipartisan efforts to mitigate the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the formidable challenges you face as you navigate this profoundly complex crisis and the enormous amount of work you and your staff members are devoting as you forge a path forward.

We are writing because we are deeply concerned that delaying emergency spending is effectively deepening a crisis that has already shattered lives, devastated businesses large and small and the jobs they provide, and disrupted research aimed at diseases that rob Americans of health, hope and time.

In a recent editorial in the journal *Science*, National Cancer Institute Director Dr. Ned Sharpless cited research studies that project 10,000 excess deaths from just two types of cancer due to COVID-19-engendered delays in cancer screening and treatment. Congress and the White House can take action to forestall tragic outcomes like this, but every day of delay squanders opportunities to do so. Inaction on emergency spending is a dangerous reversal in your proactive efforts to protect the American people from the ruinous effects of COVID-19, and we respectfully ask you to recommit to forging a compromise now that saves lives, reignites medical progress, and addresses other dangerously compromised societal needs.

Throughout your respective tenures in Congress, you have played profoundly important roles in advancing medical progress. In fact, your leadership has seeded basic research that is integral to the development of COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines. Your stewardship of fast-paced medical progress is needed again now to restore at least \$10 billion in COVID-19 eroded medical research funding. If gaps in research funding are not addressed, the setbacks to progress will be significant and lasting. As more Americans confront diseases and conditions like Alzheimer's, cancer, sickle cell anemia, ALS, Parkinson's Disease, Diabetes, Bipolar Disorder, and MS, the human and fiscal cost of research setbacks is simply too high.

Beyond medical progress, this pandemic has had a corrosive effect on research needed to outsmart identity theft, digital health hacking, and cybersecurity threats; create new export markets; advance our nation's agriculture and energy sectors; and meet other crucial national interests. By providing at least \$10 billion for medical research and \$16 billion for grants funded through NSF, the Department of Agriculture, and other research agencies, you can fight back against the stultifying effects of COVID-19 on American priorities, needs, and aspirations.

Finally, we urge you to assign urgent priority to confronting the stark racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 outcomes, as well as evaluating other potential disparities such as the potential for diminished access to telemedicine in rural areas of the nation. Congressman Don Beyer (D-VA) has introduced legislation, the [*Addressing COVID-19 Health Disparities Act*](#) (H.R. 8067), that we believe is important for both Chambers of Congress to embrace and fund as part of the emergency spending package. Congressman Beyer's bill recognizes the need for evidence-based interventions and would leverage the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to deploy the health services research and implementation science needed to quickly compile, evaluate, and translate evidence into high impact solutions.

As it stands, Black people are dying of COVID-19 at more than twice the rate of their white counterparts. Death rates are also significantly higher for Latino/Hispanic people, American Indians and Alaska Natives¹. Other highly alarming disparities among U.S. subpopulations are emerging as more data is gathered and evaluated. Taking action now will save lives.

As always, we are here to support your efforts in any way we can. Please feel free to reach out to us concerning these urgent requests or any other issue, and thank you and your respective staff members again for your extraordinary service to our nation.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Woolley".

Mary Woolley
President and CEO, Research!America