



October 28, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Senator Murray:

As members of One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC), a broad coalition of cancer-related organizations that focuses on federal investment in cancer research, we thank you for your continued efforts to develop legislation under the Innovation for Healthier Americans Initiative and improve upon the work of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). OVAC members were encouraged by your remarks about NIH funding at the Senate appropriations hearing on October 7th, and we ask that you include funding for the NIH and FDA in the HELP Committee's innovation bill. As a coalition, OVAC focuses exclusively on increasing federal funding for cancer research and other programs essential to the fight against cancer, which is why our comments focus solely on the need for greater resources for the NIH and FDA. Many OVAC members have also and continue to reach out to you directly to comment on other issues being considered by the committee.

It is estimated that almost 1.7 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer this year. More than 589,000 Americans will die from the disease in 2015, and it will cost our economy an estimated \$216 billion in direct treatment costs and lost productivity. Annual cancer incidence rates are also projected to increase by 31 percent over the next decade, growing to 2.1 million people diagnosed in 2025.

For decades, research conducted at the NIH and National Cancer Institute (NCI) has played a key role in virtually every major cancer prevention, detection, and treatment discovery. As a direct result of this research, overall cancer mortality rates have been in decline since the mid-1990s, and there are now more than 14.5 million cancer survivors living in the U.S. Unfortunately, this progress has not extended to some childhood and adult cancers, and underserved groups such as racial and ethnic minorities, highlighting the need for continued robust investment. Yet, when adjusting for inflation, NIH's budget has decreased by more than \$6.5 billion since FY 2003.

As we usher in an era of research marked by precision medicine and innovative cancer treatments, such as immunotherapies that can fight some of the deadliest and most aggressive forms of cancer, it is vital that we do everything we can to guarantee that the researchers engaged in these critical advancements have the money necessary to continue their work. However, it is imperative that these promising new opportunities are supported in addition to continued support for ongoing and new investigator-driven

research projects. To ensure that the research being supported today yields the cancer treatment of tomorrow, Congress must sustain and expand the support it is currently providing.

As members of OVAC, we ask that the HELP Committee's Innovation bill include a dedicated line of funding that will help support the development of next generation tools and treatments for cancer and other major public health problems. It is imperative that funding provided through a HELP Committee bill supplement funds allocated to the NIH and FDA through appropriations bill. A mandatory source of funding will help to ensure that the current momentum in research is not hindered by potential budget limitations.

On behalf of the millions of researchers, physicians, pharmacists, nurses, patients, and survivors represented by OVAC, we commend your momentous effort to accelerate the pace of medical discovery.

Sincerely,

Action to Cure Kidney Cancer
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Association for Cancer Research
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Sexual Health Association
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Cancer Support Community
Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer Research
Children's Cause for Cancer Advocacy
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer
Esophageal Cancer Action Network
Fight Colorectal Cancer
The Intercultural Cancer Council Caucus
International Myeloma Foundation
LIVESTRONG Foundation
Lung Cancer Alliance
Malecare Cancer Support
Men's Health Network
Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation
Myeloproliferative Neoplasms (MPN) Research Foundation
National Brain Tumor Society
National Coalition for Cancer Research (NCCR)
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Prevent Cancer Foundation
The Sarcoma Foundation of America
St. Baldrick's Foundation
Susan G. Komen