American Association for Cancer Research

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Alliance of AACR Presidents

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Chief Executive Officer

November 12, 2012

The Honorable John Boehner
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United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Eric Cantor
Majority Leader
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Whip
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Jon Kyl
Minority Whip
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The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Vice-Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Denny Rehberg
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Minority Whip
United States Senate

The Honorable Harry Reid
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United States Senate

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
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United States Senate

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Dear House and Senate Leaders:

As current and former Presidents of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), the world's first and largest scientific organization dedicated to the conquest of cancer, we urge you to make cancer research and biomedical science a national priority. Specifically, we ask you to act swiftly to avoid sequestration, and call on you, our Nation's leading policy makers, to provide annual budget increases for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) that are at least comparable to the rate of biomedical inflation.

We are deeply concerned about the devastating impact that budget sequestration, if allowed to go forward, will have on the health of all Americans by slowing scientific progress against disease and disability. The projected 8.2% cut to NIH is a staggering $2.5 billion, with NCI's share alone being approximately $400 million. It has been estimated that the number of meritorious research grants across NIH would be reduced by 2300. Also, hundreds of patients would lose access to life-saving clinical trials. NIH Director Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D. and NCI Director Harold Varmus. M.D. have warned that a cut of this magnitude would impact every aspect of these agencies. Even without the dire threat of sequestration, the federal investment in medical research through NIH has decreased nearly every year since 2003 in both inflation-adjusted dollars and as a share of GDP.

Stagnant funding has caused success rates for NIH investigators to reach historic lows; levels that NIH Director Dr. Collins has publicly stated are especially devastating for first-time investigators who are seeking to get their programs up and running. When the chances for funding success are poor, the most innovative, but usually riskier, scientific proposals are less likely to be approved. This in turn creates missed opportunities to drive the science forward, ultimately slowing the translation of the science into tangible therapies that will benefit patients.

Now is not the time to cut funding for life-saving research. Sustaining our country's steadfast commitment to NCI and NIH will result in improvements to the entire spectrum of patient care, from cancer prevention, early detection, and diagnosis, to treatment and the future care of cancer survivors. The AACR *Cancer Progress Report 2012* details the key advances in cancer research that have saved countless lives, spurred innovation and contributed to the economic prosperity for our country and all of its citizens.

Just a few examples of the extraordinary advances made against cancer are cited below:

- Death rates in the United States for all cancers combined decreased between 1990 and 2007 by:
    - 22% for men and 14% for women.
    - This totals 898,000 fewer deaths from the disease during this time period.
- Today, more than 68% of adults are living five or more years after initial diagnosis, up from 50% in 1975.
- The five-year survival rate for all childhood cancers combined is 80% vs. 52% in 1975.

This unprecedented progress against cancer is the result of breakthroughs in research, combined with visionary public health policy and the passionate work of countless survivors and patient advocates. For example, in 2011 alone:

- Eight new cancer drugs for treating a variety of cancers were approved, two of which are entirely new classes of drugs.
- A new drug was developed to treat precancerous lesions of the skin.
- Four new uses were approved for previously approved cancer drugs, one of which has shown to reduce side effects.

However, despite the significant advances in cancer research that have resulted in improvements in survival for many cancers, more than 577,000 people will die this year from the disease. In fact, more than 1.6 million Americans are diagnosed annually, and approximately 1 out of every 3 women and 1 out of every 2 men will develop cancer in their lifetimes. These sobering statistics, coupled with the enormous complexity of most cancers, underscore the need to continue and strengthen our nation's commitment to cancer research and biomedical science now more than ever. The investments made in cancer research and biomedical science, particularly those supported by public funds through NCI and NIH, are also vital to addressing the rising cancer incidence due to an aging population, while at the same time curbing the overall annual costs of cancer—which exceeded $226 billion in 2007.

We recognize the tremendous challenges facing our nation's economy, and we acknowledge the difficult, and often painful, decisions that must be made to restore our country's fiscal health. Funding research through the NIH, however, is part of the solution to our economic restoration, serving as an important generator of jobs and increasing economic activity in local communities. By strengthening our commitment to cancer research and biomedical science through funding NCI and NIH, we can ensure the health and well-being of both the American people and our economy into the future.

Meeting the nation's fiscal challenges over the long term is dependent on making the necessary investments in research in the short term to improve the health of our citizens, grow the economy, create jobs and make our nation more competitive.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

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President 1963-1964
Arthur C. Upton, M.D. (h.c.)
Former Director
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The mission of the American Association for Cancer Research is to prevent and cure cancer. Founded in 1907, the AACR is the world's oldest and largest professional organization dedicated to advancing cancer research. The membership includes 34,000 basic, translational and clinical researchers; health care professionals; and cancer survivors and advocates in the United States and more than 90 other countries. The AACR marshals the full spectrum of expertise from the cancer community to accelerate progress in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer through high-quality scientific and educational programs. It funds innovative, meritorious research grants, research fellowships and career development awards to young investigators, and it also funds cutting-edge research

projects conducted by senior researchers. The AACR has numerous fruitful collaborations with organizations and foundations in the U.S. and abroad, and functions as the Scientific Partner of Stand Up To Cancer, a charitable initiative that supports groundbreaking research aimed at getting new cancer treatments to patients in an accelerated time frame. The AACR Annual Meeting attracts more than 17,000 participants who share the latest discoveries and developments in the field. Special Conferences held throughout the year present novel data across a wide variety of topics in cancer research, treatment, and patient care, and Educational Workshops are held to provide unique opportunities for the education and training of both young and senior cancer investigators. The AACR publishes seven major peer-reviewed journals: *Cancer Discovery*; *Cancer Research*; *Clinical Cancer Research*; *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*; *Molecular Cancer Therapeutics*; *Molecular Cancer Research*; and *Cancer Prevention Research* with high impact factors, and in 2010 they received 20 percent of the total number of citations made to articles in oncology journals. The AACR also publishes *Cancer Today*, a magazine for cancer patients, survivors and their caregivers, which provides practical knowledge and new hope for cancer survivors. A major goal of the AACR is to educate the general public and policymakers about the value of cancer research in improving public health, the vital importance of increases in sustained funding for cancer research and biomedical science, and the need for national policies that foster innovation and the acceleration of progress against the 200 diseases we call cancer.