



**Association of
American Medical Colleges**
655 K Street, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20001-2399
T 202 828 0400
aamc.org

July 24, 2020

The Honorable Edward Markey
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thom Tillis
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cory Gardner
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Gary Peters
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Markey, Tillis, Gardner, and Peters:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), thank you for introducing the Research Investment to Spark the Economy (RISE) Act, authorizing approximately \$26 billion for federal research agencies to mitigate disruptions related to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and to help restore pre-pandemic momentum in the nation's scientific enterprise. The AAMC is pleased to endorse this important legislation.

The AAMC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through innovative medical education, cutting-edge patient care, and groundbreaking medical research. Its members comprise all 155 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 80 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC serves the leaders of America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their 173,000 faculty members, 89,000 medical students, 129,000 resident physicians, and more than 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences.

Medical schools and teaching hospitals are leading centers of medical research, with scientists at these institutions conducting over 50% of extramural research funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH); they also engage with a number of other federal science agencies. This partnership has led to many of the world's most important medical advances – from fundamental science that lays the foundation for future diagnostics and therapies, to life-changing preventive interventions and treatments resulting in sharp declines in death from heart disease and stroke, new cancer immunotherapies that are dramatically improving survival rates for some cancers, and new technologies like CRISPR and other gene-editing tools that hold great potential to yield treatments for diseases that currently have none. Most recently, this commitment to research has

July 24, 2020
Page Two

enabled medical schools and teaching hospitals to play an instrumental role in the nation's COVID-19 response, developing much-needed diagnostic and serological tests, advancing research on potential vaccines and/or therapeutic candidates, and continuing to provide expert patient care for patients, informed by the latest innovations in basic and clinical research.

Over the last few months, many labs have pivoted to pandemic-related research to accelerate global efforts to combat COVID-19. As you know, however, to promote social distancing and safety, institutions nationwide were forced to suspend other research activities that required access to laboratories and research facilities, leading the vast majority of labs and clinical research nationwide to shut down or scale back operations substantially. Progress on conducting new experiments has been delayed for many, and existing research that was suspended mid-stream will need to begin again anew.

As labs begin to resume their non-COVID-19 research operations cautiously and with protections to safeguard personnel, institutions will incur substantial expenses to support the research workforce, but existing funding will not be sufficient to address pandemic-related disruptions. In recent testimony before a Senate committee, for NIH alone, NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, estimated at least \$10 billion in research that will be lost as a result, to say nothing of the impact on patients, who will be forced to wait longer for progress on a wide array of health threats, and the impact on the research workforce pipeline, as early stage investigators may be forced to choose different career paths.

Your legislation takes an important step in preserving our nation's investment in research across federal science agencies and in ensuring that we do not lose ground in innovation and discovery. Research relief will be key to allow the research enterprise to resume operations and restore progress as quickly as possible to pre-pandemic levels. The U.S.'s economic vitality and global competitiveness are both favorably enhanced by the federal commitment to research, and a thriving, diverse national science agenda also is essential to help the nation address the current crisis and build resilience against future threats. We are grateful that you are championing these needs as a key priority and for your ongoing efforts to secure funding support.

Thank you again for your leadership, and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Skorton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being the most prominent.

David J. Skorton, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer
Association of American Medical Colleges