November 12, 2014

Dear Chairs Mikulski and Rogers and Ranking Members Shelby and Lowey:

As members of One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC), a coalition of more than 45 public interest groups representing millions of cancer researchers, patients, survivors, and their families throughout the nation, we ask that you make funding for programs essential to the fight against cancer a top priority as you work to complete FY 2015 appropriations. The FY 2015 Senate Labor-HHS-Education bill that was approved by the subcommittee restored cancer research and prevention funding at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to pre-sequestration levels. We ask that any final FY15 appropriations bill at a minimum provides this amount.

Despite recent advances, cancer remains a major public health crisis. This year alone, an estimated 1.6 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer, 585,000 people in the U.S. will die from the disease, and it will cost our economy an estimated $216 billion. Further, cancer incidence is projected to nearly double by 2020, particularly among the aging Baby Boomer population. The signs of progress have also been painfully elusive for some childhood and adult cancers; treatment options are lacking for some of these diseases or have significant long-term side effects. However, significant progress in the fight against cancer is within reach if this effort is adequately resourced.

Unfortunately, progress in the fight against cancer has been slowed not just by steep spending cuts in FY13, but from a decade of stagnant funding. When accounting for inflation, the NIH budget has dropped 22 percent ($6 billion) since 2003; the National Cancer Institute’s (NCI) budget has deteriorated even more – 24.7 percent ($1.1 billion). The reason for this difference is that cancer research funding as a share of the NIH budget
has steadily declined for more than a decade. In the early 2000s, the NIH funded nearly one out of three grant applications overall; last year the rate was about one in six (16.8 percent); meanwhile, the success rate for NCI research grant applications has fallen to just one in seven (13.7 percent). Many cancer researchers are frustrated that they are limited by a lack of resources at a time when the scientific opportunities for breakthroughs are so promising.

Likewise, state health departments have been unable to fully implement cancer control strategies as a result of inadequate funding. States have been forced to scale back on prevention programs and reduce the number of screenings they provide as funding for CDC cancer programs has not kept up with their needs.

Federal cancer research and prevention funding saves lives and promotes economic growth at a time when our country is still desperate to do both. Please provide the funding necessary to getting the fight against cancer back on track in FY 2015. We ask that at a minimum, the funding lost in the past few years for cancer research, prevention, nursing, and other important programs that play a direct role in reducing cancer incidence and mortality be restored. The members of OVAC thank you for your consideration of this request and stand ready to support your efforts to promote research and prevention funding.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Cancer Gene Therapy
Alliance for Prostate Cancer Prevention
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Association for Cancer Research
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Sexual Health Association
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society of Clinical Oncology
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Association of Community Cancer Centers
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
C-Change
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
Friends of Cancer Research
Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association
Intercultural Cancer Council Caucus
International Myeloma Foundation
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
LIVESTRONG Foundation
Lung Cancer Alliance
Malecare Prostate Cancer Support
Men’s Health Network
Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation
The MPN Research Foundation
National Alliance of State Prostate Cancer Coalitions
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Brain Tumor Society
National Cervical Cancer Coalition
National Coalition for Cancer Research (NCCR)
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Preventing Colorectal Cancer
Sarcoma Foundation of America
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
St. Baldrick’s Foundation
Susan G. Komen
Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network