



April 11, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Labor, Health and Human Services
Education and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services
Education and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Cochran and Blunt and Ranking Members Mikulski and Murray:

As members of One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC), a coalition of public interest groups representing millions of cancer researchers, patients, survivors and their families, we ask that you make funding for cancer research and prevention programs, including President Obama's National Moonshot Initiative a top priority in the FY 2017 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. We thank you for prioritizing funding for the NIH and CDC cancer programs in the FY16 omnibus spending bill, and implore you to continue this momentum as researchers and scientists discover more breakthroughs in the understanding and treatment of cancers.

Cancer Moonshot and Cancer Research

As a community, we are inspired by the President's call for a Cancer Moonshot and support the proposed increase in funding directed towards accelerating progress in preventing, diagnosing, and treating cancers. This new initiative comes on the heels of the largest increase in cancer research funding in over a decade. OVAC is appreciative to Congress for passing the 2016 budget deal, essentially kick starting the work to be done towards the new moonshot initiative. The proposed increases for the NIH, especially to the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and Precision Medicine Institute (PMI) are an imperative to the restoration of funding shortfalls that have severely hampered progress in the last decade and will build on the support provided by Congress in FY16.

OVAC urges Congress to support a \$2.4 billion increase for the NIH in FY 2017. In light of the moonshot initiative, OVAC requests that funding for NCI be prioritized and receive at least \$5.9 billion, an increase of \$680 million, in order to get the program underway. Additionally, we ask Congress to provide \$301 million for the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), and \$157 million for the National Institute on Nursing Research (NINR). The more than 200 diseases that we call “cancer” take a tremendous toll on our nation. It is estimated that almost 1.7 million people in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer this year. More than 595,000 Americans will die from the disease in 2016, which translates to more than 1,630 people a day. 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. Recent estimates also show that cancer costs the U.S. economy more than \$216 billion annually in direct treatment costs and lost productivity, a number that will increase dramatically as incidence rates climb.

Cancer Prevention and Early Detection – Putting Research Advances into Practice

OVAC also requests that you provide the CDC cancer programs with a minimum of \$514 million in FY 2017 and we encourage you to reject the funding cuts to the CDC’s cancer prevention and screening programs that were laid out in the President’s budget.

About half of the 595,000 deaths that will occur from cancer this year could be averted through prevention: by eliminating tobacco use, encouraging better diet and exercise, and giving all Americans access to cancer screening and preventive medicine. The CDC cancer prevention and control programs provide vital resources to every state for cancer monitoring and surveillance, screening programs, state cancer control planning and implementation, and awareness initiatives targeting breast, skin, prostate, colon, ovarian, and blood cancers.

We were dismayed to see proposed cuts to the CDC in the President’s budget and strongly urge Congress to reject this proposal and increase funding to the CDC cancer programs. Adequate funding for the CDC cancer programs in FY 2017 will ensure that a half-million women are screened for breast and cervical cancer, allow tens of thousands of men and women to have access to colorectal screening, enable proper monitoring of state- and local-based cancer patterns and trends, and provide greater support for state and local awareness and education programs. It is also imperative that the CDC have sufficient resources to address the unique needs of the growing population of survivors who are living with, through and beyond a cancer diagnosis. We know that even after treatment ends, the cancer journey does not, and many survivors face long-term emotional, physical and financial side effects.

Additionally, 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.

Oncology Nursing – Caring for Patients and Conducting Research

Lastly, OVAC requests that the Health Resources and Services Administration Title VIII Nursing Programs receive \$244 million in FY 2017. Oncology nurses are on the front lines when it comes to providing quality cancer care, and contribute significantly to cancer research. More funding for the Health Resources and Services Administration's nurse training programs is necessary to ensure enough resources to fund a higher rate of nursing scholarships and loan repayment applications and to support other vital efforts to address the current and future nursing workforce shortage.

For all of these reasons, we ask that you to ensure that the fight against cancer remains a top national priority. We ask that the funding lost in the past few years for cancer research, prevention, nursing, and other important programs be restored so cancer researchers can capitalize on the scientific opportunities before them and patients receive the care they deserve.

The members of OVAC thank you for your consideration of this request and stand ready to support your efforts to promote research funding.

Sincerely,

Action to Cure Kidney Cancer
Alliance for Prostate Cancer Prevention (APCaP)
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Association for Cancer Research
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO)
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
Cancer Support Community
Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer Research
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer
Dermatology Nurses' Association
Esophageal Cancer Action Network
Fight Colorectal Cancer
Friends of Cancer Research
Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association
Intercultural Cancer Council Caucus
International Myeloma Foundation
LIVESTRONG Foundation
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS)
The Life Raft Group
Lung Cancer Alliance
Malecare Cancer Support
Men's Health Network
Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation

MPN Research Foundation
National Alliance of State Prostate Cancer Coalitions (NASPCC)
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Brain Tumor Society
National Coalition for Cancer Research (NCCR)
National LGBT Cancer Project
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition (PPCC)
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Sarcoma Foundation of America
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
St. Baldrick's Foundation
Susan G. Komen
Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network
ZERO – The End of Prostate Cancer