United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room S-146A
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 156
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 156
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you and your colleagues begin to work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 appropriations bills, we respectfully request that you maintain a strong commitment to funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education bill. We believe that it is essential to continue federal support for medical research because of the potential health benefits for all Americans and the importance of ensuring that our Nation remains at the forefront of medical research.

The NIH is our country's premier institution for medical research, supporting research in all fifty states. It offers our best hope for treating or curing debilitating diseases like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and so many other illnesses that American families battle every day. It is through the innovative medical research supported by the NIH that we may have a chance to contain the increasing health care costs associated with the aging of the Baby Boomer generation. A large portion of the projected increase in health care expenditures in the coming decades is due to demographic changes and the escalating costs associated with many medical conditions and chronic diseases that cost the federal government and private sector billions of dollars each year.

Our investment in the NIH has yielded an unprecedented number of scientific advances that have improved health outcomes and contributed significantly to the Nation's economic growth. NIH grants fund basic medical and translational research that turns bench-side findings into bedside interventions for patients. Unfortunately, America is losing ground as the world leader in research and development and researchers are struggling to secure funding. As NIH grants get more competitive, researchers can easily spend half their careers working before receiving a grant, resulting in promising, talented young researchers being discouraged from the field of biomedical research and some investigators deciding to abandon scientific research altogether or to conduct their research outside the United States.

We all recognize the difficult choices that need to be made with respect to the budget as we seek to reduce the deficit. If we are to improve the health of Americans and the quality of their lives, we must continue to invest in areas like biomedical research that have the potential to save money in the future, improve the lives of Americans, and offer an economic return for our Nation. We urge you to consider the tremendous benefits of a sustained investment in the NIH, and ask you to remember our Nation's role as a world leader in biomedical research and the impact this research has on patients as your Committee makes funding decisions for FY 2016. Investing in research today will yield cures and therapies for patients tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Richard Burr

Sherrod Brown

Edward J. Markey

Michael F. Bennet

Cory Gardner

Patrick Leahy

Susan M. Collins

Bill Nelson

Mazie K. Hirono

Amy Klobuchar

Sheldon Whitehouse

Johnny Isakson

Heidi Heitkamp

Thomas R. Carper

Ron Wyden

Charles E. Schumer

Kelly A. Ayotte

Tammy Baldwin

Dianne Feinstein

Thom Tillis

Debbie Stabenow

Roger F. Wicker

Barbara Boxer