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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May XX, 2010

The Honorable Daniel Inouye  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Cochran:

As you and your colleagues begin work on the Fiscal Year 2011 Appropriations bills, we respectfully request that you provide for an 11.9% increase in funding for the National Institutes of Health, for a total of \$35 billion.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is our country's premier institution for medical research and the single largest source of biomedical research funding in the world. It offers our best hope for treating or curing debilitating diseases like heart disease, cancer, diabetes and so many other illnesses American families battle every day. Over 83% of the NIH's budget is awarded through tens of thousands of competitive grants to over 325,000 researchers at universities, medical schools and research institutions in every state across the country. These grants fund basic medical research that explains how the human body works and translational research that turns laboratory findings into interventions that doctors can apply to treat their patients.

Last year the Senate generously included \$10 billion for the NIH as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act; the Department of Health and Human Services has estimated that this funding has been used to create or retain over 50,000 well-paying jobs. When this funding runs out at the end of 2010, researchers will be faced with drastic cuts in their budget, reductions in staff and limits to the research they can conduct.

These reductions are compounded by the fact that the annually appropriated NIH budget has increased by less than the rate of medical inflation over the last several years. As a consequence, the NIH is gradually losing purchasing power, and grantees are slowly reducing the size of their operations as their grants decrease in value. Senior researchers are worried that the slow decline in funding will have a long-term impact on the United States' continued ability to be a leader in biomedical research; already, they are seeing young doctors turn away from medical research because of limited opportunities to fund their work.

As grants become more competitive, opportunities for high-risk research with the possibility of high returns are diminishing. The Challenge Grants funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act demonstrate the potential of sustained increases in NIH funding: these awards targeted challenging research areas that could see large benefits with sufficient funding. The NIH received more than 20,000 proposals for Challenge Grants, despite having only \$200

million to provide about 200 grants. Additional funding for the NIH would ensure that more of these worthy applications are accepted and could lead to significant breakthroughs.

If we are to improve the health of all Americans, the Senate must continue to invest in the NIH. We are aware of the many demands facing the Appropriations Committee during this difficult year, but urge you to consider the tremendous benefits that we as a Nation will reap from a sustained investment in the NIH and ask you to remember our Nation's role as a leader in biomedical research as your Committee makes FY 2011 funding decisions.

Sincerely,

Bob Carey, Jr.

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