



March 5, 2018

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

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
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 Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

As members of One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC), a broad coalition of public interest groups representing millions of cancer patients, researchers, providers, survivors and their families, we urge you to make funding for cancer research and prevention programs a top priority in FY 2019.

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 United States will be diagnosed with cancer this year. More than 609,000 Americans will die from the disease in 2018, which translates to more than 1,660 people a day. 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.

Yet, we know that investment in research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) leads to lives saved. For the last 50 years, every major medical breakthrough in cancer can be traced back to the NCI and NIH. Because of the previous investment in cancer research, more than 15.5 million American cancer survivors are alive today, and we are enjoying a quarter century of sustained declines in cancer mortality. That overall decline in cancer mortality of 26 percent since 1991 amounts to 2.4 million cancer deaths averted.

Thanks to your leadership, significant progress has been made to reduce the loss of purchasing power experienced by NIH and NCI since FY 2003, the end of the five-year doubling of NIH. However, NIH funding still lags behind what it would have been if funding had simply kept up with biomedical inflation.

To continue the progress that has led to medical breakthroughs for treatment and therapies for millions of cancer patients NIH and NCI need an increased, sustainable federal investment. Although Congress has not yet completed the FY 2018 appropriations process, OVAC recommends an increase of at least \$2 billion over the FY 2018 level, plus the \$215 million increase in 21st Century Cures Act funding for NIH that Congress has already committed to provide in FY 2019. This request does not include any new set-asides for opioids research or other initiatives that Congress may provide. OVAC recommends a proportional increase for NCI, in addition to designated funding for the Beau Biden Cancer Moonshot Initiative in FY 2019.

While NIH funding has risen in recent years, funding for cancer prevention and control programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has lagged. In fact, between FY 2010 and FY 2017, funding for these programs fell by \$14 million, from \$370 million to \$356 million. Adjusted for inflation, the purchasing power for CDC's cancer programs dropped by 11 percent over those seven years. Congress has a rare opportunity to reverse this trend and invest in CDC's evidence-based cancer prevention and control programs, which are saving lives in communities across the country. We urge you to provide at least \$514 million for these vital activities. The Division of Cancer Prevention and Control (DCPC) at the CDC provides vital resources to every state for cancer monitoring and surveillance, tobacco cessation, state cancer control planning and implementation, survivorship programs, and screening and awareness initiatives targeting breast, cervical, skin, prostate, colon, and ovarian cancers.

Additionally, 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 essential endeavors to address the current and future nursing workforce shortage.

OVAC also understands the critical role of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in fostering the development of new cancer treatments. The 21st Century Cures Act authorized the establishment of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Oncology Center of Excellence (OCE), the first of several planned inter-center institutes to help coordinate activities in major disease areas. OVAC urges Congress to provide \$20 million for the FDA's OCE in FY 2019, as proposed in the President's budget.

Lastly, OVAC also recognizes the value of the Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) in supporting innovative and life-saving cancer research. The CDMRP funds high-impact research for cancer prevention, detection, treatment, and survivorship to support Service members, their families, and the American public at-large.

Below please find an overview of OVAC's program level requests:

National Institutes of Health (NIH) – *at least \$2 billion more than the FY 2018 level, not counting for the 21st Century Cures Act or other new set-asides, including proportional increases for:*

- National Cancer Institute (NCI)
- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)
- National Institute on Nursing Research (NINR)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Cancer Programs - \$514 million, including:

- National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program: *\$50 million*
- National Program of Cancer Registries: *\$65 million*
- National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program: *\$275 million*
- Colorectal Cancer Control Program: *\$70 million*
- National Skin Cancer Prevention Education Program: *\$5 million*
- Prostate Cancer Awareness Campaign: *\$35 million*
- Ovarian Cancer Control Initiative: *\$8 million*
- Gynecologic Cancer and Education and Awareness (Johanna's Law): *\$5.5 million*
- *Cancer Survivorship Resource Center: \$900,000*

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

- Title VIII Nursing Programs: *\$244 million*

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) - *\$3.3 billion*

- Oncology Center of Excellence: *\$20 million*

Once again, thank you for your continued leadership on funding issues important in the fight against cancer. Funding for cancer research, prevention, survivorship, nursing, and the FDA must continue to be top budget priorities in order to increase the pace of progress in the fight against cancer. OVAC once again calls on Congress to sustain our nation's commitment to cancer research and prevention by increasing support for these efforts.

Sincerely,