

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2020

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

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
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 136
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 Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

As you and your colleagues begin to work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 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. For the past four years, NIH has been able to advance biomedical innovation and research because of significant investments. For example, in Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020, members from both parties agreed to further invest in biomedical breakthroughs beyond the previous year's levels. We commend the Appropriators for recognizing the critical role support for the NIH plays in spurring continued discoveries that will save and improve lives, and lay the foundation for new treatments and therapies that may help the United States address our most challenging public health needs. It is essential to continue this federal support for the benefit of the American people and the importance of ensuring that our Nation remains at the forefront of medical research.

The NIH is our country's premier institution for biomedical innovation, supporting research in all fifty states. It offers our best hope for treating or curing debilitating diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and so many other illnesses that American families battle every day. It is through NIH-supported innovative medical research that we may have a chance to contain the rising health care costs associated with an aging population. Demographic changes and the escalating expenses associated with medical conditions cost the federal government and private sector hundreds of billions of dollars each year, but NIH research has laid the groundwork to help curb those trends.

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, clinical and translational research that turns bench-side findings into bedside interventions for patients. NIH supports the work of 300,000 individuals focused on cutting-edge biomedical research at 2,500 institutions across the country. Unfortunately, America has struggled to maintain its position as the world leader in research and development, and researchers have similarly struggled to secure funding. As

world leader in research and development, and researchers have similarly struggled to secure funding. As NIH grants become more competitive, researchers can easily spend half their careers working before receiving a grant. Secure NIH funding allows scientists to do what they do best—discover tomorrow’s therapies and cures. It also prevents promising, talented young researchers from leaving the field of biomedical research and ensures that seasoned investigators continue to conduct their research in the United States. We hope that the renewed commitment to NIH funding will help reverse these troubling trends.

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 continue grappling with emerging threats, as well as improve the health of Americans and the quality of their lives, we must continue to invest in biomedical research that has the potential to save money, improve lives and offer an economic return for our Nation. As your Committee makes funding decisions for FY 2021, we urge you to consider the tremendous benefits of 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 the American people. We also ask that you include the full allocation of funding for the NIH provided by the 21st Century Cures Act. Investing in research today will yield cures and therapies for patients tomorrow.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.



Richard Burr