

November 18, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Minority Leader Reid:

The undersigned organizations collectively represent millions of American veterans, military retirees, military families, and civilians who benefit from the ongoing research funded by the Defense Health Research Programs at the Department of Defense (DoD). We have worked tirelessly throughout the year to advocate for continued funding for the programs, and we were pleased to see that both the House and Senate versions of the fiscal year 2017 Defense Appropriations Act include strong funding levels for medical research.

We are deeply troubled to learn that Congress may now not complete the fiscal year 2017 appropriations process and instead attempt to pass a short-term or even long-term continuing resolution. This approach would have devastating consequences for medical research, creating unnecessary instability and uncertainty in the grant solicitation, grant review, and grant making processes at DoD. This will also delay the ability of DoD to most effectively convene programmatic panels to identify and implement programmatic changes, effectively convene peer-review panels to provide thorough review of grant applications, and conduct appropriate negotiations to ultimately award FY17 grants.

Furthermore, failure to enact into law a fiscal year 2017 Defense Appropriations Act will interrupt important research pipelines that have allowed young investigators at U.S. universities to build careers in medical research. This also will compromise the ability of scientific laboratories across the U.S to effectively plan and prepare the highest quality grant applications, potentially diminishing opportunities to maintain discovery-based research programs.

Both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have worked hard to make important programmatic and funding changes to the defense health programs included in their respective versions of the FY17 Defense Appropriations Act. These efforts, and those made by the American research community to prepare for new research opportunities, will be wasted if Congress does not complete its work.

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Most importantly, failure to enact a final bill will have life and death implications on the millions of Americans – including veterans – suffering from chronic and debilitating disorders. This will delay important new discoveries and translation of medical innovation into new treatments and cures for many disorders.

Our organizations also care deeply and are grateful for the hard work by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to include funding increases for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in their versions of the fiscal year 2017 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations Act. The combined impact of not approving both the NIH funding increase and funding for the DoD health research programs will have a devastating impact on the entire American medical research enterprise.

We urge you to work together in a bipartisan, bicameral spirit and complete the fiscal year 2017 appropriations process. We also hope that the passions of our patient advocates, who dedicate considerable time and energy to advocate for these programs, will be represented in the work you do to enact this budget.

Sincerely,

Action to Cure Kidney Cancer
Adult Congenital Heart Association
Alpha-1 Foundation
The ALS Association
American Association for Cancer Research
American Brain Tumor Association
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Gastroenterological Association
American Liver Foundation
American Lung Association
American Psychological Association
American Thoracic Society
American Urological Association
Aplastic Anemia & MDS International Foundation
The Arthritis Foundation
Association of American Medical Colleges
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network (BCAN)
Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America
CureHHT
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer
Digestive Disease National Coalition

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Dystonia Medical Research Foundation
Epilepsy Foundation
Fight Colorectal Cancer
FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered
Foundation to Eradicate Duchenne
GBS|CIDP Foundation International
Hepatitis Foundation International
International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders
International Myeloma Foundation
Interstitial Cystitis Association
Kidney Cancer Association
LAM Foundation
Littlest Tumor Foundation
Living Beyond Breast Cancer
Lung Cancer Alliance
Lymphoma Research Foundation
Malecare Cancer Support
Melanoma Research Foundation
Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
Muscular Dystrophy Association
National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Kidney Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
NephCure Kidney International
Neurofibromatosis Network
NF Midwest
Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy (PPMD)
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Research!America
Scleroderma Foundation
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
Susan G. Komen
Texas NF Foundation
Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance
US Hereditary Angioedema Association
Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education & Support Network
The Veterans Health Council
Vietnam Veterans of America
Weill Cornell Medicine
ZERO-The End of Prostate Cancer