

DEADLIEST CANCERS COALITION

April 13, 2020

Sent via email

Dear Member of Congress:

As members of the Deadliest Cancers Coalition, a collaboration of national nonprofit organizations and industry focused on addressing issues related to our nation's most lethal cancers, we deeply appreciate your continued leadership in increasing funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We also thank you for including all of the deadliest cancers in the Department of Defense's Congressional Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) in FY 2020 for the first time and for Congress' quick initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We understand that this is going to be a challenging year given the critical continued focus on coronavirus. However, we also know that medical research has been shown to be an important economic driver. A recent report showed that the \$30.82 billion that NIH awarded for research grants in FY2019 supported 475,905 jobs and \$81.22 billion in national economic activity. This funding is going to continue to be essential, not just to the patients who are counting on the treatments and early detection tools that will be developed as a result, but also as part of a plan to reboot the economy after the pandemic.

The steady funding increases you have provided over the last several years have made an important impact on medical and cancer research. While we are making progress on many of the 200 diseases we call "cancer", including some progress on a few of the deadliest cancers, there is much more that needs to be done.

Deadliest cancers are defined in the Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act (Public Law 112-239), as cancers with a five-year survival rate below 50 percent. While a variety of cancers fall under this definition, nearly half of the cancer deaths that will occur this year will be caused by seven site-specific cancers: ovary, brain, stomach, esophagus, lung, liver, and pancreas. While each is unique, the nation's deadliest cancers present some common challenges: (1) there are few early detection tools and/or effective treatments and (2) research is desperately needed to change their persistently low survival rates.

The Deadliest Cancers Coalition calls on the 116th Congress to support the nation's deadliest cancers by:

1. Continuing to support critical research on the nation's deadliest cancers by:
 - Providing \$44.7b for NIH and \$6.9b for NCI for FY 2021;
 - Continuing to include all of the deadliest cancers in the CDMRP for FY2021; and
 - Including report language in the FY 2021 LHS Appropriations bill that continues to support the goals of the Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act by directing NCI to outline the steps that can be taken to speed progress in all of the deadliest cancers, as defined by the statute;

2. Ensuring access to existing early detection and treatment tools by:
 3. Co-sponsoring the Clinical Treatment Act (H.R. 913) and the Henrietta Lacks Enhancing Cancer Research Act (S. 946/H.R. 1966)
 - Continuing to safeguard protections for pre-existing conditions, essential health benefits, and Medicare coverage for cancer treatments; and by
4. Increasing awareness by joining the Congressional Caucus on the Deadliest Cancers

On behalf of patients diagnosed with our nation's deadliest cancers, we look forward to working with you on these requests. Please contact Megan Gordon Don, Executive Director, at (202) 246-8095 or mdgon@mgdstrategies.com if you have any questions or would like to discuss our requests further.

Sincerely,

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases

American Gastroenterological Association

American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy

Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization

Blue Faery: The Adrienne Wilson Liver Cancer Association

Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer

Digestive Disease National Coalition

Esophageal Cancer Action Network

Go2 Foundation for Lung Cancer

Hepatitis B Foundation

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation

National Brain Tumor Society

National Pancreas Foundation

Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance

Pancreatic Cancer Action Network

Society of Gynecologic Oncology

TargetCancer Foundation