



March 31, 2015

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Rogers and Cochran and Ranking Members Mikulski and Lowey:

As members of One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC), a coalition of public interest groups representing millions of cancer researchers, patients, survivors and their families, we ask that you make funding for cancer research and prevention programs a top priority in the FY 2016 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. The enduring erosion of funding to the National Cancer Institute (NCI), compounded by the proposed cuts for CDC cancer prevention and screening programs, put our nation at risk of losing the progress we have made in the fight against cancer.

Cancer Research – The Front Line in the Fight Against Cancer

Specifically, OVAC asks that you provide the National Institutes of Health (NIH) with a budget of at least \$33 billion in FY 2016, including \$5.4 billion for NCI, \$294 million for the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), and \$155 million for the National Institute on Nursing Research (NINR).

Cancer is the leading threat to health in our country that reaches indiscriminately into every district represented in Congress. In 2015, an estimated 1.6 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer, more than 589,000 people in the U.S. will die from the disease, and it will cost our economy an estimated \$216 billion annually in direct treatment costs and lost productivity. Furthermore, cancer incidence is projected to nearly double by 2020, particularly among the aging Baby Boomer population. Yet, cancer research funding as a share of the NIH budget has steadily declined for more than a decade while the scientific and public health needs have increased. Ten years ago, NIH funded nearly one out three grant applications. However, in FY 2014 that number dropped to about one in six. Despite these challenges, we are making progress, due in a large part to the research supported by NIH, which has contributed to virtually every major breakthrough in the fight against cancer.

Cancer Prevention and Early Detection – Putting Research Advances into Practice

OVAC also requests that you provide the CDC cancer programs with a minimum of \$513 million in FY 2015 and we encourage you to reject the funding cuts to the CDC's cancer prevention and screening programs that were laid out in the President's budget.

About half of the 589,000 deaths that will occur from cancer this year could be averted through prevention: by eliminating tobacco use, encouraging better diet and exercise, and giving all Americans access to cancer screening and preventive medicine. The CDC cancer prevention and control programs provide vital resources to every state for cancer monitoring and surveillance, screening programs, state cancer control planning and implementation, and awareness initiatives targeting breast, skin, prostate, colon, ovarian, and blood cancers.

There is also a misconception that enactment of the Affordable Care Act obviates the need for the state-based cancer screening and prevention programs supported by the CDC. Unfortunately, even with expanded access to healthcare, there are a significant number of adults that will continue to rely on these safety net programs for their cancer screenings. For uninsured adults, less than 17 percent of woman over the age of 40 had a mammogram in the past year and less than 19 percent of men and woman over the age of 50 had a recent colorectal screening.

Adequate funding for the CDC in FY 2016 will allow a half-million women to be screened for breast and cervical cancer, allow tens of thousands of men and women to have access to colorectal screening, ensure we are able to monitor state- and local-based cancer patterns and trends, and provide greater support for state and local awareness and education programs.

Additionally, state health departments have been unable to fully implement cancer control strategies as a result of inadequate funding. States have been forced to scale back on prevention programs and reduce the number of screenings they provide as funding for CDC cancer programs has not kept up with their needs.

Oncology Nursing – Caring for Patients and Conducting Research

Lastly, OVAC requests that the Health Resources and Services Administration Title VIII Nursing Programs receive \$244 million in FY 2016. 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 vital efforts to address the current and future nursing workforce shortage.

For all of these reasons, we ask that you to ensure that the fight against cancer remains a top national priority. We ask that the funding lost in the past few years for cancer research, prevention, nursing, and other important programs be restored so cancer researchers can capitalize on the scientific opportunities before them and patients receive the care they deserve.

The members of OVAC thank you for your consideration of this request and stand ready to support your efforts to promote research funding.

Sincerely,

Action to Cure Kidney Cancer
Alliance for Prostate Cancer Prevention
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society for Radiation Oncology
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
C-Change
Cancer Support Community
Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer Research
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer
Esophageal Cancer Action Network
Fight Colorectal Cancer
Friends of Cancer Research
Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association
Intercultural Cancer Caucus
International Myeloma Foundation
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
LIVESTRONG Foundation
Lung Cancer Alliance
Malecare Cancer Support
Men's Health Network
Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation
MPN Research Foundation
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Alliance of State Prostate Cancer Coalitions
National Brain Tumor Society
National Coalition for Cancer Research (NCCR)
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Prostate Conditions Education Council
Sarcoma Foundation of America
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
St. Baldrick's Foundation
Susan G. Komen
Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network