November 16, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
House Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Reid, Mr. McConnell, Mr. Boehner, and Ms. Pelosi:

As advocates for biomedical and health research, we are writing to urge you to refrain from deploying deficit reduction strategies, like sequestration, that would slow medical progress.

Our nation leads the world in biomedical and health research, a function of public sector support and private sector ingenuity. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is unrivaled in spurring the basic discovery that lays the path for private sector innovation. Peer-reviewed NIH funding reaches all 50 states and congressional districts, spurring discovery at universities, hospitals, small businesses, and independent research institutes. In fact, NIH-supported research has:

- Supported nearly 500,000 jobs in 2011 in every state
- Generated $62 billion in economic activity in 2011
- Helped increase life expectancy from 47 years in 1900 to 78 years in 2009

But this is not just about NIH. The National Science Foundation (NSF), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) all provide a positive return on investment to our nation, protecting American lives and promoting American prosperity.

- NSF’s grant portfolio is designed to identify and pursue the best scientific opportunities across the spectrum of scientific disciplines, including biomedical research.
- FDA is a key conduit between medical discovery and medical progress, laying the path for safe and effective medical products to reach the marketplace.
- CDC conducts and supports the public health research needed to contain disease outbreaks, promote wellness, and in other ways provide basic supports for a safe and healthy society; and
- AHRQ combats entrenched and insidious problems in our nation’s health care system – like preventable medical errors and needless administrative red tape -- that take lives and inflate the cost of taxpayer funded health programs and private insurance alike.
Disinvesting from biomedical and health research – and the infrastructure and expertise needed to conduct it – would contravene the goal of deficit reduction. This research is one of the fundamental underpinnings of our economy, a reality well understood by other nations, which are ramping up their investment and building out their research infrastructure. Research is a catalyst that creates businesses large and small, and generates jobs in research, manufacturing, distribution, exports, health care and a host of other sectors. Those businesses and jobs supply federal revenue needed to reduce the deficit.

In addition, research can help stem runaway federal healthcare spending, which is driving our deficit. While new treatments may require additional cost at the outset, research has shown the offsetting effects of reduced hospitalizations, fewer visits to providers, reduced home care, a reduction in the Social Security disability roles, and improved productivity. As you well know, the costs of treating diseases like Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and other diseases are exploding. There is no high-impact alternative to research as a means of addressing this crisis.

When it comes to the fiscal health of our nation, biomedical and health research are part of the solution, not part of the problem. Whether it is appropriations policy or entitlement and tax reform, we urge you to discard any proposal that cuts funding or mutes incentives for public- and private-sector supported medical innovation. Compassion and pragmatism intersect in the decision to do so.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

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Hon. Patrick Kennedy
Hon. Kweisi Mfume
Hon. John Edward Porter

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Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research
Friends of the National Institute on Aging
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Genetics Policy Institute
Genetics Society of America
Great Lakes NeuroTechnologies Inc.
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The Intercultural Cancer Council Caucus
The International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders
Jackson Gabriel Silver Foundation
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Jeffrey Modell Foundation
Johns Hopkins Medicine
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Kids v Cancer
Life Technologies
Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute
Lymphangiomatosis & Gorham's Disease Alliance
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Masonic Medical Research Laboratory
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