

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 4, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Senator Specter:

We are writing today to urge the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations Subcommittee to provide the National Cancer Institute (NCI) with a 6.7 percent funding increase for fiscal year (FY) 2008. This increase will provide critical resources to advance the fight against the over two hundred types of cancer.

We strongly support biomedical research and the great promise it holds in the development of new treatments and possible cures for the many types of cancer. Past investments at the NCI have helped drive new discoveries that led to the decline in overall cancer deaths in the U.S. for the second consecutive year. Now is the time to expand our efforts in the fight against this devastating disease.

Sadly, there are still far too many people for whom this progress has been inadequate. Individuals fighting lung and pancreatic cancer continue to face discouragingly low odds of survival. In 1975, the five year survival rates for lung and pancreatic cancer were 13 and two percent, respectively. Twenty-five years later, survival rates remain at unacceptable levels of 16 and five percent, making these cancers the first and fourth leading causes of cancer related deaths. Indeed, pancreatic cancer is considered the deadliest cancer, of which 75 percent of patients diagnosed with this disease die within the first year and most within the first three to six months. Early detection tools, such as those that currently are available for ovarian, colon, breast and prostate cancer, would make a significant impact on this disease, but those tools require a new investment in basic scientific research at the NCI.

In recent years, funding for cancer research has fallen behind the promise made during the campaign to double the budget for the National Institutes for Health (NIH). When NIH funding was first doubled, success rates for first submissions of grant requests to the NCI were 30 percent overall and 15 percent for new investigators. Those rates have now dropped to an average of 20 percent overall and five percent for new investigators. We are anticipating cuts to other NCI programs that advance research, such as the Specialized Programs of Research Excellence program, which provides vital opportunities to explore new areas of research.

We cannot afford to let this trend continue. There must be new investment to see true progress in the most lethal cancers, as well as the many other types of cancer research where funding has

fallen short. Meanwhile, it is vital to ensure the continued progress in research of all cancers, including breast, prostate and colon.

We respectfully request that you support a FY08 LHHS bill that will provide the NCI with a 6.7 percent increase over the FY07 level to allow for continued progress in the fight against cancer.

Sincerely,

George Christini

Chris

Tom F. Kelly

Patrick Leahy

Bob Casey, Jr.

Joe I. Lieberman

Eric Bayh

Carl Levin

Maria Cantwell

Susan Collins

Ben Cardin

Th. Wyden

Barbara Boxer

Ben Cardin

Paul H. Ryan

Samuel H. Reed

Allyson Schwartz

Ken Salazar

Samuel Dine

Bill Nelson

Ben Card

Jim Hill

Tom Sawyer

Samuel Sawyer

David Vitter

Ed Kennedy

Chuck Schumer

Dick Durbin

Robert Menendez

Angie Klobuchar

John Z. Sauer