



FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING

A broad-based coalition of aging, disease, research, and patient groups supporting the mission of the National Institute on Aging (NIA).

May 8, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 25010

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the Friends of the National Institute on Aging (FoNIA), thank you for your leadership in ensuring that the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 appropriations legislation included increases to fund important biomedical research initiatives at the National Institutes of Health, including pioneering research at the National Institute on Aging (NIA). This investment comes at a time of unprecedented growth in the U.S. aging population and concurrent scientific advances that will enhance the care and quality of life of our nation's seniors. We are grateful for your efforts.

The FoNIA is a coalition of more than 50 academic, patient-centered and non-profit organizations supporting the NIA's mission to understand the nature of aging and the aging process, and diseases and conditions associated with growing older, in order to extend the healthy, active years of life. As you are aware, the NIA is the primary federal agency supporting and conducting Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research.

As you prepare the FY 2019 appropriations legislation, we ask that sufficient federal resources be dedicated to sustain and enhance promising and timely biomedical research at the NIA, and across the NIH. Specifically, given the unique challenges created by millions of older Americans with complex medical conditions, we are requesting:

- A \$500 million increase in the FY 2019 National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget to support biomedical, behavioral and social sciences aging research efforts across the NIH.
- Additionally, a minimum increase of \$425 million specific to research on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD), resulting in an NIH-wide dementia research budget of at least \$2.253 billion in FY 2019.

The FoNIA also supports the recommendation from the Ad Hoc Group on Medical Research to appropriate *at least* \$39.3 billion in FY 2019 for the NIH, including funds provided to through the 21st Century Cures Act for targeted initiatives. The FoNIA believes that a meaningful increase in NIH-wide funding, in combination with aging and ADRD specific increases, will be essential to sustain the research needed to make progress in addressing chronic disease, ADRD, and other diseases that disproportionately affect older people.

By 2030, there will be 72 million Americans 65 or older, more than double the number from 2000. The number of “oldest old”—people age 85 or older—is expected to more than triple between 2010 and 2050. Considering the large amount of funding that is spent on age-related diseases, it makes sound economic sense to increase federal resources for aging research. Research that can be translated into better and more efficient care of older adults can also help drive down health care costs while improving quality of life.

The NIA is at the forefront of applying scientific advancements to enhance the health of older adults, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability. Several timely and promising NIA research initiatives, and related NIH activities, are highlighted below:

Age is a primary risk factor for ADRD. Over five million Americans aged 65 years and older may have ADRD with a predicted increase to ~14 million by 2050. NIA’s comprehensive ADRD research program spans the spectrum of discovery, from basic neuroscience through translational research and clinical application. The National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s Disease and allocation of additional funds over the past several years have accelerated momentum in this field.

Because aging is also the single biggest risk factor for the development of many chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, many cancers and arthritis, a better understanding of the basic biology of aging may open up new avenues for prevention and cures. Geroscience seeks to understand the molecular and cellular mechanisms responsible for aging being a major risk factor. The NIA, through its Geroscience Network, is spearheading research that will translate the findings about aging biology into clinical interventions, with the aim of increasing the years of healthy life – the healthspan – rather than simply lifespan.

Understanding that up to half of premature deaths in the United States are due to behavioral and social factors, the NIA is committed to supporting basic behavioral and social research in aging. The NIA-supported Health and Retirement Study remains the world’s premier multidisciplinary source of data on the health and well-being of older Americans, linking objective and subjective measures of health with information about retirement, economic status, family structure, personality, as well as health behaviors and service utilization.

In early 2018, the NIA announced funding to support research for dementia care in Long-term Services and Support (LTSS) settings to address practical questions faced by Alzheimer’s disease and AD-related dementia patients, clinicians, and caregivers (both paid and unpaid). These trials will assess an intervention in the conditions in which it is intended to be used rather than in ideal circumstances. The aims of trials such as these will improve the quality of life for persons with dementia and their caregivers, deliver more patient-focused, cost-effective care in LTSS and reduce disparities in LTSS care.

The NIA also supports several innovative programs dedicated to training the next generation of aging researchers. These include the Paul Beeson Career Development Awards in Aging

Research for outstanding clinician-scientists and the Butler-Williams Scholars Program, a “boot camp” for emerging investigators in aging research to prepare them to compete successfully for grant funding.

Recognizing that older adults, who carry a disproportionate burden of disease, are often underrepresented in clinical trials, the NIH announced revisions to its Policy and Guidelines on the Inclusion of Individuals Across the Lifespan to include a plan describing how participants across the lifespan will be included and justify the proposed age range of participants. The FoNIA applauds this initiative and knows that this will continue to improve our knowledge and understanding of improving healthy aging.

With your continued support, the NIA is accelerating scientific discoveries in aging that we, as a nation, are counting on. With millions of Americans facing the loss of their functional abilities, their independence and their lives to chronic diseases of aging, there is a pressing need for robust and sustained investment in the vital work of the NIA. Continued, and meaningful investments in the NIA will make it possible to ultimately enhance the quality of care for older adults across the nation.

Thank you for your consideration of this funding request. Should you need additional information, please contact me at 202-689-2975.

Very truly yours,



Jennifer L. Pharaoh
Friends of the National Institute on Aging
Chair, 2018-19