



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).

October 27, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to thank your Administration for supporting the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) in particular, and to encourage you to continue supporting aging research at the NIH in fiscal year (FY) 2016. To this end, we **strongly urge you to include an increase of \$500 million from the FY 2015 level, in the Administration's proposed FY 2016 budget to support biomedical, behavioral, and social sciences aging research efforts at the NIH.**

The institutes that make up the NIH, and specifically the NIA, lead the national scientific effort to understand the nature of aging in order to promote the health and well-being of older adults whose numbers are projected to increase dramatically in the coming years due to increased life expectancy and the aging of the baby boom generation. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of people age 65 and older will more than double between 2010 and 2050 to 88.5 million or 20 percent of the population; and those 85 and older will increase three-fold, to 19 million. As the 65+ population increases so will the prevalence of diseases disproportionately affecting older people.

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and the tremendous toll they place on caregivers are a dramatic example of the crisis ahead. The NIA reports that as many as 5.1 million Americans over 65 are today living with Alzheimer's disease and the numbers of Americans that will suffer from this disease are projected to increase dramatically in the coming years. It is estimated that over 10 million baby boomers will develop Alzheimer's in addition to today's victims. Alzheimer's disease will also cause physical and emotional impairments on more and more families and caregivers. The growing numbers of Alzheimer's victims and the rapidly-rising costs associated with the disease will put a heavy economic burden on families, businesses and government. Estimates are that the costs of Alzheimer's care will amount to \$2 trillion by 2020.

In stark contrast to the increasing costs of healthcare for the aging population, we as a nation are making a miniscule, and declining, investment in the prevention, treatment or cure of aging conditions. We appreciate that despite a budget shortfall, NIH dedicated an additional \$50 million for Alzheimer's disease research with support from the Administration last year. This funding has been allocated to many worthy Alzheimer's disease research programs, but there are many recommendations that grew out of the NIH's May 2012 Alzheimer's Disease Research Summit: Path to Treatment and Prevention, that must be supported to meet the goal of preventing or effectively treating Alzheimer's disease and related dementias by 2025 set out in the Administration's National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease.

With an infusion of much needed support in FY 2016, NIH can expand promising, recent research activities to:

- Implement new prevention and treatment clinical trials, research training initiatives, care interventions, and genetic research studies developed to meeting the goals of the National Plan to Address Alzheimer's disease;
- bolster trans-NIH initiatives developed by the NIH GeroScience Interest Group to understand basic cellular and molecular underpinnings of aging as a principal risk factor for chronic disease and to explore common mechanisms governing relationships between aging and chronic disease;
- understand the impact of economic concerns on older adults by examining work and retirement behavior, health and functional ability, and policies that influence individual well-being; and
- support family caregivers by enhancing physician-family communication during end-of-life and critical care.

NIH is poised to accelerate the scientific discoveries 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 work of the NIH. In every community in America, healthcare providers depend upon NIH-funded discoveries to help their patients and caregivers lead healthier and more independent lives. In these same communities, parents are hoping NIH-funded discoveries will ensure that their children have a brighter future, free from the diseases and conditions of aging that plague our nation today.

Considering what the federal government spends on the health care costs associated with age-related diseases, it makes sound economic sense to increase federal resources for aging research.

Chronic diseases associated with aging afflict 80 percent of the age 65+ population and account for more than 75 percent of Medicare and other federal health expenditures. Unprecedented increases in age-related diseases as the population ages are one reason the Congressional Budget Office projects that total spending on healthcare will rise to 25 percent of the U.S. GDP by 2025.

Research that can be translated quickly into effective prevention and efficient health care will reduce the burden of a "Silver Tsunami" of age-associated chronic diseases. Breakthroughs from NIH research can lead to treatments and public health interventions that could delay the onset of costly conditions such as arthritis, heart disease, kidney disease, stroke, diabetes, bone fractures, age-related blindness, Alzheimer's disease, ALS, and Parkinson's diseases. Such advances could save trillions of dollars by the middle of the current century. We are convinced that providing NIH with additional resources is one of the smartest investments your Administration can make.

As your Administration develops a proposed FY 2016 budget that includes health research for all Americans, we look forward to working with you. Thank you for considering our views, and please do not hesitate to contact Sue Peschin, MHS, Chair, Friends of the NIA (FoNIA), at (202) 293-2856, or email speschin@agingresearch.org; or Kathy Jedrziwski, Ph.D., co-Chair of FoNIA, at (215) 898-2445 or email jedrzmk@mail.med.upenn.edu if you have questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Geriatrics Society
American Federation for Aging Research
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
American Psychological Association

American Society of Nephrology
American Society on Aging
American Sociological Association
Arthritis Foundation
Association of Population Centers
BrightFocus Foundation

Consortium of Social Science Associations
Cure Alzheimer's Fund
Federation of Associations in Behavioral &
Brain Sciences
Gerontological Society of America
International Cancer Advocacy Network (ICAN)
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association of Social Workers
National Center on Caregiving, Family
Caregiver Alliance

National Hispanic Council on Aging
Pennsylvania Institute on Aging
Population Association of America
The Simon Foundation for Continenence
Society for Women's Health Research
USAgainstAlzheimer's