

# DEADLIEST CANCERS COALITION

April 30, 2014

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
Chairman  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Labor, Health and Human Services  
Education and Related Agencies  
Appropriations Subcommittee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Republican  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Appropriations Subcommittee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Mikulski, Senator Shelby, Chairman Harkin, and Senator Moran:

As members of the Deadliest Cancers Coalition, a collaboration of national non-profit organizations focused on addressing policy issues related to our nation's most lethal cancers, we ask that you make funding for the National Cancer Institute (NCI) a top priority in the FY 2015 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. We recognize that setting federal spending priorities under the existing spending caps is challenging, however, we also recognize that to make progress on our nation's most challenging cancers, we must expand the funding opportunities available at the NCI. Specifically, we ask that you provide NCI with \$5.26 billion in FY 2015.

The deadliest cancers are defined by the Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act as those with a five-year survival rate below 50 percent. While there are various types of cancers that fall under this definition, it is worth noting that nearly half of the 585,000 cancer deaths expected in 2014 will be caused by eight site-specific cancers: ovary, myeloma, brain, stomach, esophagus, lung, liver, and pancreas.

Some of the things that unite these cancers are that there are few early detection tools and/or effective treatments and research is desperately needed to change the extraordinarily low survival rates. There is promise in the medical research field for many of these diseases. In fact, as a result of the Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act, the NCI has released a "scientific framework" report outlining priority areas of research focus for pancreatic cancer and is in the process of developing a similar report for lung cancer. These reports demonstrate the vast potential for progress in diseases that are currently feared as some of our nation's leading killers, however, that promise is being severely under-cut by the steady erosion of funding for the NCI.

When accounting for inflation, the NIH budget has dropped 22% (\$6 billion) since 2003; NCI's budget has been cut even more – 24.7% (\$1.1 billion). Further, cancer research funding as a share of the NIH budget has declined. In the late 1990s, NCI's budget made up 18.7 percent of the NIH budget. Today, it is 16.4 percent of the NIH budget. That decline has reduced NCI's

funding by \$680 million below what it would have received in FY 2014 if its share of NIH's total budget had been maintained.

This situation cannot continue. We ask that you take a strong stand against the further erosion of cancer research funding and that you take additional steps to fill the hole that has been left by sequestration and years of budget cuts and/or flat funding. Please make cancer research and the NCI a top national priority. We thank you for your consideration of this request and stand ready to support your efforts to promote cancer research funding. Please contact Megan Gordon Don at 202.742.6776 or [mgdon@pancan.org](mailto:mgdon@pancan.org) if you have any questions or would like to discuss our requests further.

Sincerely,

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American College of Gastroenterology  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Liver Foundation  
American Pancreatic Association  
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy  
Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO)  
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer  
Digestive Disease National Coalition  
Esophageal Cancer Action Network (ECAN)  
Hepatitis B Foundation  
Hepatitis Foundation International  
International Myeloma Foundation  
Lung Cancer Alliance  
Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation  
National Brain Tumor Society  
National Ovarian Cancer Coalition  
National Pancreas Foundation  
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance  
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network  
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists  
TargetCancer