

December 10, 2013

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Chairman  
Budget Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairman  
Budget Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Ryan and Murray:

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 end sequestration and reach a budget agreement that provides the National Institutes of Health (NIH) with the resources necessary to advance research into our nation's most stubborn cancer killers.

*The Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act*, legislation which requires the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to provide strategic direction for the nation's deadliest cancers and was passed into law last year with overwhelming bi-partisan and bi-cameral support, defines deadly or recalcitrant cancers 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 580,350 cancer deaths expected in 2013 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, but that promise is being severely under-cut by sequestration.

We are particularly concerned that the NIH's budget has decreased, both in inflation-adjusted dollars and as a share of GDP, nearly every year since 2003. Further, as a result of sequestration, NIH was cut by more than \$1.5 billion in FY 2013, including more than \$250 million in cuts to cancer research. This has resulted in the number of new research grants funded by the NIH falling to the lowest level since FY 1998 and existing grants being cut and forced to scale back their scope of work. This situation is alarming for researchers into every type of disease, but is particularly alarming when considering the nation's deadliest cancers.

Under the *Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act*, the NCI must release the first scientific frameworks for pancreatic and lung cancers by July 2014. It will be very difficult to leverage the opportunities that come out of these scientific frameworks if NCI's funding levels do not improve.

We appreciate the challenges you and your colleagues face. We also recognize that any agreement you reach will impact the setting of our nation's budget priorities. Investing in the medical research necessary to find early detection tools and effective treatments for our nation's

deadliest cancers must be a top priority. We therefore strongly urge you to work together to reach an agreement that provides the resources necessary to give all those facing a cancer diagnosis a fighting chance at survival. The members of the Deadliest Cancers Coalition stand ready to work with you to achieve this goal. Please contact Megan Gordon Don, Vice President of Government Affairs & Advocacy at the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network at [mgdon@pancan.org](mailto:mgdon@pancan.org) or 202.742.6776, if you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

### **The Deadliest Cancers Coalition**

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American College of Gastroenterology  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Pancreatic Association  
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  
National Brain Tumor Society  
National Pancreas Foundation  
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance  
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network  
Sarcoma Foundation of America  
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists  
TargetCancer