



## FELLOWS OF THE AACR ACADEMY

615 Chestnut Street | 17th Floor | Philadelphia, PA 19106-4404  
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# AACR

American Association  
for Cancer Research

FINDING CURES TOGETHER®

December 4, 2019

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear House and Senate Appropriations Leaders:

As the President of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), the world's first and largest scientific organization dedicated to the conquest of cancer, I join distinguished Fellows of the AACR Academy, which includes AACR Past Presidents and many prominent others, to thank you for your exceptional support of medical research and for your steadfast commitment to making the National Institutes of Health (NIH) a national priority.

During the past four-year period, your unstinting dedication to the NIH has resulted in its budget being increased by 30 percent, and we deeply appreciate your current efforts to provide another robust funding increase for the NIH in FY 2020. Your extraordinary leadership is providing the resources that are needed for our nation's researchers and physician-scientists to significantly accelerate the pace of progress against cancer, as well as the hundreds of other diseases that afflict millions of Americans.

As you and your colleagues on Capitol Hill meet over the next few weeks to finalize the FY 2020 appropriations process before the continuing resolution expires on December 20, we want to express our strong support for the \$3 billion funding increase for NIH (to \$42.1 billion) that was provided in the Senate Chairman's mark.

Additionally, we encourage you to accept the House's recommendation for a \$300 million increase (to \$6.444 billion) for the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in FY 2020 plus a proportional share of the additional \$1 billion that the Senate is proposing for overall NIH funding in its bill.

The AACR, with its more than 44,000 members from 120 countries, has broad expertise in all areas of the field and is dedicated to advancing cancer research and its mission to prevent and cure all of the more than 200 different cancers. During its long existence, the AACR has been at the forefront of every major breakthrough against cancer. We marshal the full spectrum of scientific and clinical knowledge in cancer research to identify the top priorities; convene conferences and educational workshops all over the world; publish eight high-impact, peer-reviewed scientific journals; produce a publication for cancer survivors, patients, and their caregivers; work to raise funds from the philanthropic community for meritorious



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cancer research conducted by scientists at all career levels; and advocate for robust, sustained, and predictable annual funding increases for the NIH and NCI.

There has never been a more propitious time in the history of cancer research, which underscores why it is extremely important that the NIH and NCI budgets increase annually at robust rates. In the United States, overall cancer incidence and death rates are declining, while the number of cancer survivors has reached a record high of approximately 17 million, which are in part due to new drug approvals that are rapidly bringing lifesaving cures to patients. Today's precision medicine is resulting in more successful treatments for cancer patients, often without the punishing side effects that past generations of patients had to endure. This unparalleled progress has been driven largely by federally funded research.

Despite these enormous accomplishments, a concerning trend is taking place. Most notably, there is a falling payline at the NCI, and the success rate for the funding of investigator-initiated research project grants (RPGs) at the NCI has also been declining. This is primarily attributable to the remarkable advances in and enthusiasm for cancer research that have stimulated an unprecedented 50 percent increase in the number of investigator-initiated RPG applications to the NCI since FY 2013.

Additionally, and most importantly, with 606,880 estimated cancer deaths this year alone, our work is far from done. While advances in precision medicine are yielding extraordinary results for some cancer patients, there are still so many cancer patients for whom current therapies are not effective. Furthermore, many patient populations continue to suffer disproportionately from cancer and its associated effects, particularly certain racial and ethnic minority groups, individuals with low socioeconomic status, residents in certain geographic locations, and the elderly. We can and must do more to overcome these unacceptable cancer disparities.

Therefore, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of significant annual budget increases for medical research, and we call on you to remove the threat of a long-term continuing resolution that is so concerning to researchers, patient advocates, and the public by finalizing your work on the FY 2020 appropriations process before December 20.

As you continue your work in earnest, we respectfully urge you to increase our nation's investment in the NIH by providing \$42.1 billion to this lifesaving agency, as well as by allocating \$6.444 billion for the NCI that the House is proposing plus a proportional share of the additional \$1 billion for NIH that the Senate has included in its FY 2020 bill.

Cancer researchers and physician-scientists, such as the 88 who have signed on to this letter, 12 of whom are Nobel Laureates, are poised to drive forward and deliver further transformative scientific advances that will save more lives from cancer, and we sincerely appreciate your significant ongoing efforts to provide the support that is needed for us to reach this goal.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Respectfully,

Elaine R. Mardis, PhD

AACR President, 2019-2020 & Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019



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### Fellows of the AACR Academy

James P. Allison, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 2018  
The University of Texas MD Anderson  
Cancer Center  
Houston, TX

Kenneth C. Anderson, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2015  
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute  
Boston, MA

Karen H. Antman, MD  
AACR President, 2003-2004  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013

Frederick R. Appelbaum, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center  
Seattle, WA

Carlos L. Arteaga, MD  
AACR President, 2014-2015  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2015  
The University of Texas Southwestern  
Medical Center  
Dallas, TX

Alan Ashworth, PhD, FRS  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2018  
UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
San Francisco, CA

David Baltimore, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 1975  
California Institute of Technology  
Pasadena, CA

Stephen B. Baylin, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
Baltimore, MD

Joseph R. Bertino, MD  
AACR President, 1995-1996  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
The Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey  
New Brunswick, NJ

Bruce A. Beutler, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2018  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 2011  
University of Texas Southwestern  
Medical Center  
Dallas, TX

Mina J. Bissell, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory  
Berkeley, CA

Elizabeth H. Blackburn, PhD  
AACR President, 2010-2011  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 2009  
UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
San Francisco, CA

Clara D. Bloomfield, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2016  
The Ohio State University Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
Columbus, OH

Michael A. Caligiuri, MD  
AACR President, 2017-2018  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2018  
City of Hope National Medical Center  
Duarte, CA

Lewis C. Cantley, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Weill Cornell Medical College,  
New York-Presbyterian Hospital  
New York, NY



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Mario R. Capecchi, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 2007  
University of Utah School of Medicine  
Salt Lake City, UT

Webster K. Cavenee, PhD  
AACR President, 1998-1999  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research  
San Diego, CA

Martin Chalfie, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, 2008  
Columbia University  
New York, NY

Bayard D. Clarkson, MD  
AACR President, 1980-1981  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center  
New York, NY

Lisa M. Coussens, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Oregon Health and Science University Knight  
Cancer Institute  
Portland, OR

Carlo M. Croce, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
The Ohio State University Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
Columbus, OH

Tom Curran, PhD  
AACR President, 2000-2001  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Children's Mercy Hospital  
Kansas City, MO

George Q. Daley, MD, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, MA

Riccardo Dalla-Favera, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2017  
Columbia University Institute  
for Cancer Genetics  
New York, NY

Nancy E. Davidson, MD  
AACR President, 2016-2017  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2017  
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center  
Seattle, WA

Ronald A. DePinho, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2015  
The University of Texas MD Anderson  
Cancer Center  
Houston, TX

Vincent T. DeVita, Jr., MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Yale Cancer Center  
New Haven, CT

Vishva M. Dixit, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2017  
Genentech, Inc.  
South San Francisco, CA

Jennifer A. Doudna, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2017  
University of California, Berkeley  
Berkeley, CA

Brian J. Druker, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Oregon Health and Science University Knight  
Cancer Institute  
Portland, OR



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Raymond N. DuBois, MD, PhD  
AACR President, 2008-2009  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Medical University of South Carolina  
Charleston, SC

Robert N. Eisenman, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2015  
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center  
Seattle, WA

Stephen J. Elledge, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, MA

Napoleone Ferrara, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center  
La Jolla, CA

Gordon J. Freeman, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, MA

Elaine Fuchs, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Rockefeller University  
New York, NY

Robert C. Gallo, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
University of Maryland School of Medicine  
Baltimore, MD

Judy E. Garber, MD, MPH  
AACR President, 2011-2012  
AACR Academy President, 2019-2021  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute  
Boston, MA

Laurie H. Glimcher, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2018  
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute  
Boston, MA

Joe W. Gray, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2016  
Oregon Health & Science University  
Portland, OR

Philip D. Greenberg, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center  
Seattle, WA

William N. Hait, MD, PhD  
AACR President, 2007-2008  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Johnson & Johnson External Innovation  
Raritan, NJ

H. Robert Horvitz, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 2002  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Cambridge, MA

Susan Band Horwitz, PhD  
AACR President, 2002-2003  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine  
Bronx, NY

Tony Hunter, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Salk Institute for Biological Sciences  
La Jolla, CA

Richard O. Hynes, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer  
Research at MIT  
Cambridge, MA



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Tyler Jacks, PhD  
AACR President, 2009-2010  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer  
Research at MIT  
Cambridge, MA

Elizabeth M. Jaffee, MD  
AACR President, 2018-2019  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2018  
Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
Baltimore, MD

Peter A. Jones, PhD, DSc  
AACR President, 2005-2006  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Van Andel Research Institute  
Grand Rapids, MI

V. Craig Jordan, OBE, PhD, DSc  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
The University of Texas MD Anderson  
Cancer Center  
Houston, TX

Carl H. June, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2017  
University of Pennsylvania Perelman  
School of Medicine  
Philadelphia, PA

Michael B. Kastan, MD, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2017  
Duke Cancer Institute  
Durham, NC

Mary-Claire King, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
University of Washington School of Medicine  
Seattle, WA

Kenneth Kinzler, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
Baltimore, MD

Richard D. Kolodner, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research  
San Diego, CA

Margaret L. Kripke, PhD  
AACR President, 1993-1994  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
The University of Texas MD Anderson  
Cancer Center  
Houston, TX

Arnold J. Levine, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Institute for Advanced Study  
Princeton, NJ

Ronald Levy, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Stanford University School of Medicine  
Stanford, CA

David M. Livingston, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute  
Boston, MA

Lawrence A. Loeb, MD, PhD  
AACR President, 1988-1989  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
University of Washington School of Medicine  
Seattle, WA

Scott W. Lowe, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center  
New York, NY



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Elaine R. Mardis, PhD  
AACR President, 2019-2020  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Nationwide Children's Hospital  
Columbus, OH

Joan Massagué, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2016  
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center  
New York, NY

Lynn M. Matrisian, PhD  
AACR President, 2004-2005  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network  
Manhattan Beach, CA

Frank McCormick, PhD  
AACR President, 2012-2013  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
San Francisco, CA

Harold L. Moses, MD  
AACR President, 1991-1992  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Vanderbilt-Ingram Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
Nashville, TN

Larry Norton, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center  
New York, NY

Olufunmilayo I. Olopade, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
The University of Chicago Medical Center  
Chicago, IL

Carol L. Prives, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2015  
Columbia University  
New York, NY

Sir Richard J. Roberts, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 1993  
New England Biolabs, Inc.  
Ipswich, MA

Charles L. Sawyers, MD  
AACR President, 2013-2014  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center  
New York, NY

Andrew V. Schally, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 1977  
University of Miami/VA Medical Center  
Miami, FL

Robert D. Schreiber, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Washington University School of Medicine  
St. Louis, MO

Phillip A. Sharp, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 1993  
David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer  
Research at MIT  
Cambridge, MA

Arlene H. Sharpe, MD, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, MA

Charles J. Sherr, MD, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital  
Memphis, TN

Bruce W. Stillman, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory  
Cold Spring Harbor, NY



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Louise C. Strong, MD  
AACR President, 1996-1997  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
The University of Texas MD Anderson  
Cancer Center  
Houston, TX

Jack W. Szostak, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 2009  
Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts  
General Hospital  
Boston, MA

Bert Vogelstein, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
Baltimore, MD

Peter K. Vogt, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
The Scripps Research Institute  
La Jolla, CA

Daniel D. Von Hoff, MD  
AACR President, 1999-2000  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
The Translational Genomics Research Institute  
Phoenix, AZ

Geoffrey M. Wahl, PhD  
AACR President, 2006-2007  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
Salk Institute for Biological Sciences  
La Jolla, CA

Robert A. Weinberg, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2013  
MIT Whitehead Institute  
for Biomedical Research  
Cambridge, MA

Irving L. Weissman, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
Stanford University School of Medicine  
Stanford, CA

Zena Werb, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive  
Cancer Center  
San Francisco, CA

Eric F. Wieschaus, PhD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2019  
Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, 1995  
Princeton University  
Princeton, NJ

Owen N. Witte, MD  
Fellow of the AACR Academy, Class of 2014  
University of California, Los Angeles  
Los Angeles, CA