

# **AACR-AACI Virtual Hill Day 2020**

## **Call Script for Meetings with Members of Congress and Staff**

Good Morning/Afternoon. I am [name], [title and organization]. I appreciate the time you're taking to talk to [me/our group] about the importance of medical research.

[I'm here/we are here] on behalf of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) and the Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI). Both organizations are committed to using medical research to improve the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer, and ultimately to find cures. Both organizations represent the interests of cancer centers, early career medical researchers, senior research investigators, cancer patients and survivors.

**[If colleagues are also on the call with you: *I am also joined on the call by colleagues from [organization]. I will let each person introduce him/herself and briefly explain their specialty.*"].**

The COVID-19 pandemic has shined a bright light on the importance of medical research, and we know that even in the midst of this crisis, cancer isn't taking a break. In 2019, an estimated 1.8 million people were diagnosed with cancer, and out of those persons, an estimated 600,000 died. The economic impact of cancer in the United States is nearly \$100 billion. Cancer disproportionately affects minority communities at a terrifying rate, and despite the fact that the overall rates of cancer have declined over the decades, there are some cancers where the mortality rate has increased.

We thank you and other Members of Congress for providing increased funding for NIH in FY 2020, and we are back again, to ask for continued robust funding of NIH and NCI in FY 2021, as well as supplemental support for medical research in response to COVID-19. Specifically, we are asking Congress to...

- Provide \$10 billion for NIH in the next COVID-19 supplemental package to restart research and clinical trials that have been put on hold due to the pandemic.
- Continue to prioritize funding for medical research in the regular appropriations

process and provide \$44.7 billion for NIH in FY 2021, and increase of \$3 billion. Fulfilling this request would enable continued, real growth above inflation for medical research and support promising science in all areas.

- Include \$6.9 billion for the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in FY 2021. This will be a \$500 million increase from FY 2020. This request is supported by the NCI's Director's "professional judgement budget".

***[INCLUDE PERSONAL STORIES/ANECDOTES/EXAMPLES OF HOW INCREASED FUNDING AFFECTS CANCER RESEARCH-Examples are below.***

**EXAMPLE #1: Supplemental Package Funding-**Thousands of clinical trials have been stalled as resources have been diverted to help with the COVID-19 pandemic. I myself had to stop a clinical trial for an early detection test for pancreatic cancer. I and several other researchers had to shut down our research, as our labs were closed, and grant money shifted to COVID-19-related projects. Valuable time and resources have been lost due to the laboratory closings. When clinical laboratories reopen, it will take a tremendous effort to bring things back up to a pre-COVID-19 level. Private donations will come and be appreciated, but we fear it will not be sufficient, as foundations and other organizations have taken a blow due to COVID-19. There is a great article on the American Association of Medical Colleges' website that talks about the effects of laboratory closings during the COVID-19 crisis. Here is the link: <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/labs-put-research-ice>. We will need assistance from NIH in order to re-start my clinical trial, and the clinical trials of all medical research investigators.

**EXAMPLE #2: FY 2021-**We appreciate all that Congress has done to provide essential and sustained medical research funding. Such funding will help in developing a vaccine for COVID-19 in the short term and will help support research into effectively treating heart disease, and in my case, finding an early detection test for pancreatic cancer. Pancreatic Cancer is an exceptionally lethal cancer where 80% of patients die within 6-8 months of diagnosis. One of the main reasons why the mortality rate is so high, is because early detection is unfortunately difficult. By the time pancreatic cancer is diagnosed, the cancer usually has metastasized to other areas of the body. Increased funding will ensure

that my research will continue, and that the research of other medical investigators will continue on, as we strive to increase the quality of life for so many.]

Again, we ask you for continued robust funding of NIH and NCI which ensure that medical researchers will have the necessary resources available to develop effective cancer treatments, and eventually find a cure. If you would like additional information, please contact me at [phone number], or at [email address].

In the meantime, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.