

Researchers**Against**Alzheimer's

November 14, 2012

Dear Speaker Boehner:

As researchers who have dedicated our lives to pursuing treatments and therapies for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, we are writing to urge that you protect the federal funding that is essential to sustaining and accelerating this work.

More than 5 million Americans are currently suffering from Alzheimer's disease. A survey released by the Banner Alzheimer's Institute at the beginning of the month found that nearly 1 in 2 Americans is touched by the disease. The current – and future – impact of this disease is immense: Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia will cost our country \$200 billion this year, 70 percent or \$140 billion of which will be shouldered by the federal government through Medicare and Medicaid.

Recognizing the enormous challenge Alzheimer's poses to our nation's health and finances, earlier this year our government enacted a groundbreaking National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease that contains as goal one preventing and effectively treating the disease by 2025. The chance of achieving this national goal, already a challenge, are reduced further if the across-the-board spending cuts called for under the sequester are implemented early in January. With funding levels already at historically low levels, particularly in the aging and Alzheimer's areas, a cut of this magnitude will be devastating. Rather than the number of grants lost or dollars cut, it's most important to focus on the groundbreaking Alzheimer's research that could be significantly delayed or scuttled outright as a result of the cuts:

- Research building upon our increased understanding of the human genome – knowledge made possible because of the commitment of the U.S. government – that will seek to better understand genetic risk and protective factors that make some people more predisposed to develop the disease and others able to withstand it.
- Continued pursuit of potentially valuable biomarker data that provides better insights into how Alzheimer's disease progresses so researchers will understand both signs of the disease and signs that therapies are having their desired effect.
- Multiple landmark clinical trials that are about to begin and that involve people genetically likely to develop Alzheimer's to test whether early intervention of potential therapies can actually prevent them from developing the disease.

In enacting the National Alzheimer's Project Act into law, Congress helped secure modest but necessary increased support for Alzheimer's research, a support we must continue to grow if we want to prevent and treat this disease by 2025. In addition to potentially improving the health and wellbeing of millions of people, Alzheimer's research carries with it the prospect of significant cost savings to the nation. Recent studies indicate that even the development of treatments that stop shy of a cure yet are able to delay, slow or modify the disease would have a significant impact. For example, delaying the onset of the disease by just five years would sharply reduce the number of patients with Alzheimer's disease, improving quality of life and savings tens of billions of dollars in current and expected healthcare costs. But this achievement as well as our national goal of preventing and treating the disease by 2025 will likely not be met if we sharply reduce research funding.

As you and your colleagues work to resolve the fiscal challenges impacting our nation, we urge you do so in a more nuanced way that protects the commitment to biomedical research, a commitment that has enabled the United States to be the world's medical innovator. Failure to do so will negatively impact the millions of Americans and their families already impacted by Alzheimer's, and the tens of millions more who will stand to develop the disease in the coming years if unaddressed.

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Affiliations are for identification purposes only and do not necessarily represent the endorsement of the affiliated institution

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