

December 1, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
U.S. Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

We appreciate your collective support of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute on Aging (NIA). Since it was established in 1974, the NIA has supported ground-breaking research on the diseases and disorders of aging which has improved the health and quality of life of all Americans as we age. On behalf of the American Geriatrics Society (AGS), we are writing to restate our support for increased fiscal year (FY) 2021 funding for aging research efforts at the NIH and the NIA within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The AGS greatly appreciated that both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees approved separate budget packages including increases for NIA and federal Alzheimer's disease research spending. As a member of Friends of the NIA (FoNIA)—a broad-based coalition of aging, disease, research, and patient groups committed to the advancement of medical research that affects millions of older Americans—**the AGS urges you to adopt the House-approved \$47 billion target for overall funding at NIH, a \$5.5 billion increase over the enacted FY 2020 level in the FY 2021 budget for total spending at NIH. The AGS also urges you to adopt the Senate-approved \$354 million increase over the FY 2020 enacted level for research on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.**

We continue to face an unprecedented public health emergency with the novel coronavirus which has disproportionately impacted older, medically complex individuals. The toll taken by the pandemic among our older loved ones has brought into sharp focus the need to increase research at the NIA, and across NIH, on the nature of aging, including its biology and impact on disease and disability, and the role of social determinants of health on our bodies and minds as we age, so we can identify the most effective interventions for age-related diseases, disorders, and disabilities.

The AGS believes that sustained and enhanced federal investments in aging research are essential to delivering high-quality, coordinated, and efficient care to older adults, whose numbers across the U.S. are projected to increase dramatically in the coming years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of people age 65 and older is projected to more than double from 49 million today to more than 94 million by 2060,¹ while those 85 and older is projected to more than triple from 6 million today to 19

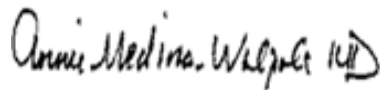
¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). An Aging Nation: Projected Number of Children and Older Adults. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2018/comm/historic-first.html>

million by 2060.² As our aging population increases, so too will the prevalence of diseases disproportionately affecting older people—most notably Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (including vascular, Lewy body, and frontotemporal dementia)—and the economic burden associated with these diseases. By 2060, for example, the number of people affected by dementia is estimated to reach 14.9 million cases—nearly triple the number in 2020.³ Further, chronic diseases related to aging, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer continue to afflict 80 percent of people age 65 and older⁴ and account for more than 75 percent of Medicare and other federal health expenditures.⁵

As we know you appreciate, the NIA sponsors and conducts most federal aging-related research and applies scientific advancements to enhance the health, safety, and independence of older adults. The ongoing federal commitment to investments in science, research, and technology leads to cutting-edge discoveries in medicine and improved patient care and reduced costs. Breakthroughs from NIH research can not only delay the onset of costly age-related diseases but also can save trillions of dollars by the middle of the current century. The AGS urges Congress to strengthen its commitment in FY 2021 so that we may advance medicine to improve care quality and fully achieve the goals of delivery system reform.

Thank you for your consideration of this funding request. If you have comments or questions about NIH funding or other issues related to the healthy aging of older Americans, please contact Anna Kim, Manager of Public Affairs & Advocacy, at 212-308-1414 or akim@americangeriatrics.org.

Sincerely,



Annette Medina-Walpole, MD, AGSF
President



Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA
Chief Executive Officer

² Ibid.

³ Matthews, K. A., Xu, W., Gaglioti, A. H., Holt, J. B., Croft, J. B., Mack, D., & McGuire, L. C. (2019). Racial and ethnic estimates of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in the United States (2015–2060) in adults aged ≥ 65 years. *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, 15(1), 17-24.

⁴ National Prevention Council. (2016). Health Aging in Action: Advancing the National Prevention Strategy. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/healthy-aging-in-action508.pdf>

⁵ Erdem, E., Prada, S.I., Haffer, S.C. (2013). Medicare Payments: How Much Do Chronic Conditions Matter? *Medicare & Medicaid Research Review*, 3(2). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.5600/mmrr.003.02.b02>

December 1, 2020

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

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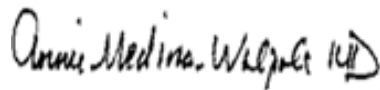
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