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April 13, 2021

Patty Murray  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-ED  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Rosa DeLauro  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-ED  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-ED  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-ED  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Honorable Chairs and Ranking Members:

The 33 undersigned member organizations of the National Coalition for Heart and Stroke Research urge Congress to support the fight against heart disease, stroke, and other forms of cardiovascular disease (CVD). With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals with underlying heart disease and stroke risk factors including hypertension and obesity have faced more life-threatening complications and a substantially higher risk of death. Those with post-acute COVID-19 or “long haulers” have also developed serious conditions such as heart failure, myocarditis, and stroke. Just as concerning, patients are increasingly reporting neurological symptoms, including headaches, fatigue, sleep disorders, and cognitive problems, such as difficulty with memory and concentration. To help reduce the prevalence of heart disease and stroke and to prevent adverse outcomes from COVID-19, our coalition recommends the following allocations in the FY 2022 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations bill.

### **National Institutes of Health – Appropriation of \$46.1 Billion**

Overall, we recommend \$46.1 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to expand investments in our nation’s biomedical research infrastructure and to build on investments to combat COVID-19. Supporting the biomedical research enterprise is more important than ever for learning from this pandemic, creating science-based clinical guidelines, and understanding the epidemiology of infectious and chronic diseases. We are deeply concerned about the economic consequences that the pandemic is having on America’s research ecosystem, including recent reports that the NIH delayed and lost approximately \$16 billion worth of research due to COVID-19. We, therefore, urge Congress to also swiftly pass the RISE Act, which would authorize \$25 billion in emergency appropriations for federal science agencies, including \$10 billion for the NIH to alleviate massive setbacks in basic, translational, and clinical research.

## **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute - Appropriation of \$3.94 billion**

Globally, nearly 18.6 million people died of cardiovascular disease in 2019, the latest year for which worldwide statistics are calculated. That reflects a 17.1% increase over the past decade. Experts predict the global burden of cardiovascular disease will also grow exponentially over the next few years as the long-term effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic evolve. To sustain current activities and investment in promising and critically needed scientific research that will aggressively advance the fight against heart disease and stroke, we recommend \$3.94 billion for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Additional funding will target reducing maternal mortality, addressing congenital heart disease, and decreasing the disproportionate burden of cardiovascular disease in minority, low-income, and rural communities. The NHLBI will also continue to support research dedicated to improving our understanding of COVID-19 and developing new interventions to mitigate life-threatening complications of the disease.

## **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke - Appropriation of \$2.7 billion**

Nearly 800,000 people in the U.S. have a stroke each year. Most of these strokes are ischemic strokes, caused when a clot in a brain artery blocks blood flow, leading to permanent impairment if blood flow is not restored promptly. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) research has driven truly transformative progress in emergency treatment of ischemic strokes and continues to invest in high-quality neuroscience across the spectrum of basic, translational, and clinical stroke research. To enhance existing initiatives and proactively advance the top priorities in stroke prevention, treatment, and recovery research we recommend \$2.70 billion for NINDS. This represents a seven percent increase and will also fund ongoing stroke research conducted under the BRAIN Initiative and new research to improve our understanding of the effects of SARS-CoV-2 infection on the nervous system.

Heart disease, stroke and other forms of cardiovascular disease remain our nation's leading cause of death and most expensive disease, costing nearly \$1 billion a day. This cost is projected to reach over \$1 trillion a year by 2035. Our budgetary recommendations for NIH will help reverse this trend by supporting more research and prevention to save lives and reduce health care costs. We urge Congress to support cardiovascular disease research by including our recommended funding levels in the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. Thank you.

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Adult Congenital Heart Association· American Academy of Neurology· American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation· American Association for Thoracic Surgery· American Association of Neurological Surgeons· American College of Cardiology· American College of Chest Physicians· American Heart Association· American Neurological Association· American Occupational Therapy Association· American Physical Therapy Association· American Society of Echocardiography· American Stroke Association· American Vascular Association Foundation· Association of Black Cardiologists· Child Neurology Society· Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation, Inc.· Congress of Neurological Surgeons· Conquering CHD Heart Failure Society of America· Heart Rhythm Society· Heart Valve Voice US· Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association· Marfan Foundation· Mended Hearts, Inc.· Mended Little Hearts· Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions· Society for Vascular Surgery· Society of Interventional Radiology· Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes Foundation· Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association· Women's Heart Alliance· WomenHeart