



A PATIENT-CENTERED FORUM OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN CANCER

**AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT AND TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS
REGARDING FUNDING FOR CANCER RESEARCH**

April 5, 2000

As we move closer to this year's general election, both elected officials and candidates are speaking loudly about health care and its costs. We know that one way to curb escalating costs related to health care is to invest more significantly in disease prevention and cure.

We, the undersigned members of the cancer community, represent the diversity of 10 million cancer survivors in this country; their friends and families; millions of Americans who have lost a loved one to cancer; and researchers and health care providers concerned about the cause, cure and control of cancer. We call upon Congress and the President to make necessary and strategic investments in research that will help to end this nation's longest war—the twenty-nine year old war on cancer.

Specifically, we identify the following as our Platform for FY01 Appropriations:

The budget for the National Institutes of Health must be increased by 15% over its FY00 benchmark. Without this, we will not be able to meet the broad-based bipartisan commitment by members of Congress and by Vice President Albert Gore, Jr. to double the NIH budget over the five year period, FY99 - FY03. No fewer than half of the 25 institutes, centers and agencies that comprise NIH are actively invested in cancer research, for prevention, detection, control and acceleration of new treatments.

Over and above this nation's fiscal commitment to NIH, we must fully fund the NCI director's "bypass budget" at \$4.1 billion. NCI remains the bulwark of cancer research in America, and its bypass budget identifies crucial opportunities that must be pursued today so that lives will be saved tomorrow. It enhances proven and productive research programs, many of which are taxing the existing, too-limited funding stream; it capitalizes on recent discoveries, particularly in diagnostics, genetics and molecular biology; and—most important—it offers a much needed revamping of the clinical trials program. This will encourage greater patient participation in clinical trials, the gateway to new treatments.

Unless Congress and the Administration invest appropriately in cancer research, an enormous burden will continue to be placed on our nation's health care system. One baby boomer turns fifty every seven seconds. This age marks a threshold of increased risk of cancer, which, if left unchecked, will likely result in accelerations of cancer incidence and mortality by 25% - 30% within a decade. During the same time, the cost of cancer to the nation will increase from the current \$100+ billion annually to more than \$200 billion annually.

While no price can be put on the personal loss exacted by cancer, we know that effective treatments for these diseases would result in considerable financial gain to the nation. In a recent opinion piece, the Wall Street Journal noted that, according to a present-value calculation by economists Kevin Murphy and Robert Topel at the University of Chicago, eliminating all forms of cancer would have an economic value of \$46.5 trillion. This exceeds the entire financial assets of the United States and is more than 15,000 times the \$3 billion that our nation will spend this year for cancer research. Clearly, investments in cancer research can yield enormous remunerations.

We appreciate Congress's and Vice President Gore's efforts, and we look forward to working with you in the coming year to beat cancer once and for all.

Alliance for Lung Cancer Advocacy Support & Education
American Association for Cancer Research
American Foundation for Urologic Disease
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society for Therapeutic Radiation and Oncology
American Urological Association
Association of American Cancer Institutes
B'nai B'rith International
Cancer Care
Cancer Research Foundation of America
Cancer Research Institute
CaP CURE Government Research Initiatives Group
Cure for Lymphoma Foundation
Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups
Friends of Cancer Research
Kidney Cancer Association
Leukemia & Lymphoma Foundation
Men's Health Network
Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Prostate Cancer Coalition
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation
Us TOO! International, Inc.
Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization