



July 16, 2021

The Honorable Diana DeGette  
United States House of Representatives  
2111 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Fred Upton  
United States House of Representatives  
2183 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives DeGette and Upton,

President Joe Biden has called for the creation of an Advanced Research Projects Agency-Health (ARPA-H) as a mechanism for realizing his goal of “ending cancer as we know it.” The agency is based on the premise that the current research ecosystem in which National Institutes of Health (NIH) funds basic science, and private industry funds translation of that science into products used by patients, while generally successful, results in persistent innovation and translation gaps. These gaps occur because needed work either does not fit in the traditional NIH purview or the necessary economic returns for private industry do not exist. ARPA-H holds the potential to quickly bridge the gap between the lab and the patient with targeted innovative therapies while simultaneously benefiting from and bolstering the bedrock research being done at NIH and the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

To be successful, ARPA-H must be designed and operated in a transparent and patient-centric manner that builds off of the existing research ecosystem rather than displacing it. The One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC) coalition has developed the following consensus recommendations for ARPA-H.

OVAC Recommendations

Funding

- Funding for ARPA-H must be both sufficiently substantial and sustainable over time to truly transform the biomedical ecosystem.



- ARPA-H funding should neither subtract from existing NIH funding nor prevent robust, annual increases—no less than the rate of biomedical inflation--for the NCI and other core NIH research programs.

#### Priorities and Project Selection

- ARPA-H should be transparent about its selection criteria and decision-making process for its broad strategic investment goals and selection of individual research projects. Identification of unmet needs within disease areas should be conducted through a formal multi-stakeholder process that includes patient advocacy groups. Cancer is not one disease. Stakeholders representing all aspects of the cancer community should be involved in the stakeholder process.
- ARPA-H should focus its resources on bold, transformative research. Funded projects should include not only technology improvements that advance the broader research enterprise, but also translational projects that directly yield new interventions that can benefit patients, but which have not been realized due to unfavorable market forces.
- ARPA-H should address innovation across the disease spectrum from cancer prevention through treatment.

#### Agency Culture and Authority

- ARPA-H must adopt a culture and operational processes that are distinct from NIH and which are driven by an urgency to improve patient outcomes. (This may include a time-limited presidentially appointed director).
- The agency must be empowered to, and embrace, collaborations with any and all stakeholders that can advance breakthroughs for patients including other federal agencies and public-private partnerships with industry.
- The agency should have full transactional authority, as well as the ability to conduct all phases of research, product development and regulatory approval.

#### Intellectual Property Rights



- ARPA-H should set up clear processes and guidelines for how intellectual property (IP) will be developed, captured, used and/or sold/licensed based on any products or technology that evolve from funded work.
- Innovations meant to be adopted by the research community broadly should not be inaccessible due to use or licensing costs.

#### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- The agency's projects should include a focus on addressing existing health disparities, ensure funded clinical trials are inclusive, and foster diversity in the research workforce.

The members of OVAC look forward to working with the Office of Science and Technology Policy as ARPA-H is designed and operationalized. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Keysha Brooks-Coley, Interim Chair of OVAC, at [Keysha.brooks-coley@cancer.org](mailto:Keysha.brooks-coley@cancer.org).

Sincerely,

American Association for Cancer Research  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American College of Surgeons  
American Institute for Cancer Research  
American Society for Radiation Oncology  
American Urological Association  
Association for Clinical Oncology  
Association of American Cancer Institutes  
Cancer Support Community  
Children's Cancer Cause  
Deadliest Cancers Coalition  
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer  
Fight Colorectal Cancer  
Friends of Cancer Research  
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer



Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association  
International Myeloma Foundation  
Livestrong  
Men's Health Network  
National Brain Tumor Society  
National Cancer Registrars Association  
Oncology Nursing Society  
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network  
Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition  
Susan G. Komen  
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society