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IMMUNOLOGISTS

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February 27, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

by fax to (202) 225-5117

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am writing on behalf of The American Association of Immunologists (AAI), the world's largest professional society of research scientists and physicians who are dedicated to understanding the immune system. For 100 years, AAI members have devoted their professional lives to studying immunology and discovering new and improved ways to prevent, treat, and cure a wide range of infectious and chronic diseases.

AAI is deeply concerned about the impact of the sequester that may take effect as early as this Friday. According to the Senate Budget Committee, sequestration will result in a cut of \$1.56 billion (5.1%) to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the major funder of biomedical research in this nation, in this year alone. And in the remaining nine years of sequestration, NIH could face even deeper cuts.

These cuts will delay crucial advances in research that may prevent, alleviate, or cure many diseases and health conditions. They will also devastate the entire biomedical research enterprise, ending careers that are thriving and derailing many that are just beginning. NIH Director Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D., "worr[ies] desperately this [sequestration] means we will lose a generation of young scientists." (see <http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/sciencefair/2013/02/25/budget-nih-collins/1947277/>) Former NIH Director Elias Zerhouni, M.D., who served under President George W. Bush, has warned that sequestration "will impact science for generations to come ... we are going to maim our innovation capabilities if you do these abrupt deep cuts at NIH."

(see <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/02/21/former-nih-director-the-sequester-will-set-back-medical-science-for-a-generation/>) And 21 Nobel Laureates, in a December 2012 letter to President Obama, cautioned that "[s]equestration will stop breakthrough research in its tracks, and we will be unable to right the course for many years to come." (see <http://coalitionforlifesciences.org/images/pdf/laureate%20letter%20to%20president%20obama.pdf>)

For AAI members, sequestration would deal a severe blow to their work, which, among other areas, includes:

- developing effective vaccines against and treatments for influenza (pandemic and seasonal), HIV/AIDS, and other infectious and chronic diseases;
- discovering new defenses against emerging and re-emerging bacteria (such as tuberculosis), as well as drug resistant bacteria [such as Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)];
- regulating and developing better treatments for autoimmune diseases such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and lupus; and developing better therapies for children and adults with immunodeficiencies;
- developing vaccines to protect against, and therapeutics to combat, the effects of bioterrorism;
- discovering the causes of cancer and developing new and less toxic treatments; and
- developing better ways to prevent the rejection of transplanted organs and bone marrow.

We urge you to prevent sequestration and any other cuts to NIH funding that would cause similar harm. AAI members and our colleagues in the biomedical research community are dedicated to advancing the research needed to prevent and cure disease. But we cannot do it without the strong bipartisan support of Congress, and we cannot do it without adequate federal funding.

If AAI can be of assistance or answer any questions, please contact me or AAI Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs Lauren G. Gross, J.D., at lgross@aai.org, or 301-634-7743.

Thank you for your support for biomedical research and the NIH.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth J. Kovacs, Ph.D.
Chair, AAI Committee on Public Affairs
The American Association of Immunologists
9650 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20814
phone: (301) 634-7743
fax: (301) 634-7887
www.aai.org