Recognizing the Decade of Vision 2010-2020 Initiative

November 29, 2016

The Honorable Fred Upton, Chair,
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2183 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Upton:

On behalf of the vison research community, I am writing to express our continued support for the 21st Century Cures Act, H.R 6, as initially noted in the attached June 2, 2015, letter to you.

Since vision loss is a co-morbid condition of numerous diseases and conditions, we strongly support the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Innovation Fund as a means to support life-saving and life-enhancing research through these large-scale, NIH-wide initiatives—in addition to that being conducted by the National Eye Institute (NEI) within the NIH. NAEVR is pleased that the Act’s Innovation Fund enhances, not replaces, a strong investment in NIH through the regular appropriations process.

NAEVR has been vocal in its support for robust, sustained, and predictable NIH/NEI funding, so it is pleased that the Act reauthorizes NIH with increasing Fiscal Year 2018-2020 authorizing levels—which sends a strong message to the Appropriators. Enacting a multi-year Innovation Fund to augment an increasing NIH appropriation would go a long way toward reversing the erosion of NIH’s and NEI’s purchasing power, which is 20 percent lower than in FY2003 after adjusting for inflation.

Since NAEVR annually engages Emerging Vision Scientists in Capitol Hill education and advocacy, we are also pleased to see inclusion of the “Next Generation of Researcher Initiatives.” Although dedicated funding is not indicated for this program, we are hopeful that it provides a means to accelerate funding for early-stage investigators, thereby lowering the age of first-time award recipients.

Again, thank you for your leadership, and we look forward to working with the Committee to ensure House passage of the bill.

Sincerely,

James F. Jorkasy / NAEVR Executive Director
240-221-2905; jamesj@eyeresearch.org

Attachment: NAEVR June 2, 2015, Letter
Recognizing the Decade of Vision 2010-2020 Initiative

June 2, 2015

The Honorable Fred Upton, Chair,
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2183 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Upton:

On behalf of the vison research community, I am writing to thank you for your leadership on the 21st Century Cures legislation.

Per NAEVR’s attached May 21, 2015, statement, we recognize not only the “heavy lifting” by Committee/Subcommittee members and staff in developing this legislation, but also the open process that sought input from all stakeholders. We support your efforts to seek full House passage of the bill.

Since NAEVR serves as the privately-funded “Friends of the National Eye Institute (NEI)” within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), we are especially interested in the proposed authorized NIH funding levels for the next three Fiscal Years, as well as the establishment of the new Innovation Fund with funding for the next five Fiscal Years.

This legislation sets a “marker” for the appropriators in both chambers in terms of the funding necessary to continue the momentum of biomedical research, and also in recognizing the importance of funding for emerging scientists.

In that regard, NAEVR’s educational foundation—the Alliance for Eye and Vision Research (AEVR)—will feature 25 emerging vision scientists from around the United States in an October 7 Congressional Reception being held in conjunction with World Sight Day 2015. These scientists will display “plain English” posters about their research and speak to Members and staff. I will ensure that the entire Committee receives an invitation to this event.

Again, thank you for your leadership, and we look forward to working with the Committee to ensure House passage of the bill.

Sincerely,

James F. Jorkasy, NAEVR Executive Director
240-221-2905; jamesj@eyereseach.org

Attachment: NAEVR May 21, 2015 Press Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 21, 2015

NAEVR COMMENDS HOUSE 21ST CENTURY CURES LEGISLATION'S AUTHORIZING LEVELS FOR NIH, NEW INNOVATION FUND

(Washington, D.C.) Today, the National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research (NAEVR) commended the leadership of the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee on its successful markup of H.R. 6, the 21st Century Cures bill, with the purpose of accelerating the discovery, development, and delivery of cures. Although wide-sweeping in its scope and impact on federal agencies, NAEVR has focused on the bill’s authorizing levels for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which would increase by $1.5 billion per-year for the next three Fiscal Years (FY), and its establishment of a new Innovation Fund at $2 billion per-year for the next five Fiscal Years for a total of $10 billion for basic, translational, and clinical research, including funding for early-stage investigators.

NAEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky stated the following:

"NAEVR commends House Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Fred Upton (R-MI), Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Ranking Member Diana DeGette (D-CO), full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Health Subcommittee Chairman Joe Pitts (R-PA), and Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Gene Green (D-TX) for their commitment to patients through the 21st Century Cures legislation. These Members and their staff have worked tirelessly to develop this legislation through an open process that sought input from all stakeholders.

NAEVR is most encouraged by the authorizing levels for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for the next three Fiscal Years, as well as the establishment of and authorized $10 billion in funding over the next five Fiscal Years for the new Innovation Fund. We look forward to House passage of the bill and coordination with the Senate Health, Educational, Labor, and Pensions Committee to bring this meaningful legislation to fruition in this session of Congress.

In the various listening sessions held by staff, as well as in the Health Subcommittee and full E&C Committee markup, there was consensus about the need to adequately fund biomedical research. NAEVR now looks to Congressional appropriations leaders to make that intent a reality, especially since the NIH has lost 23 percent of its purchasing power since FY2003.

In the March 3 and April 30 hearings of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) Subcommittees of the House and Senate, respectively, Members on a bipartisan basis cited the recognized value of biomedical research and the need for Congress to arrive at a balanced plan for deficit reduction that would enable NIH funding increases.

NAEVR will continue to work with the authors and appropriators to put NIH back on track for sustained and predictable funding."

http://www.eyeresearch.org/press_releases/5.21.15.html