



November 30, 2011

OFFICERS

The Hon. John Edward Porter, Chair
Martha N. Hill, PhD, RN, Vice Chair
Mary Woolley, President
Georges C. Benjamin, MD, Secretary
Mary J.C. Hendrix, PhD, Treasurer

BOARD MEMBERS

Tenley E. Albright, MD
Nancy Brown
The Hon. Michael N. Castle
Susan Dentzer
Victor J. Dzau, MD
Joseph M. Fecko, MD
Jay A. Gershen, DDS, PhD
Carol W. Greider, PhD
Harry Johns
Jackie Lovelace Johnson
Evan Jones
Elizabeth Baker Keffer
Debra R. Lappin, JD
Alan I. Leshner, PhD
Lucinda Maine, PhD, RPH
Mark McClellan, MD, PhD
The Hon. Kweisi Mfume
Elizabeth G. Nabel, MD
Herbert Pardes, MD
Sudip S. Parikh, PhD
John R. Seffrin, PhD
Larry J. Shapiro, MD
Ellen V. Sigal, PhD
Laing Rogers Sisto
Christopher A. Viehbach
Jack T. Watters, MD
Elias A. Zerhouni, MD

HONORARY DIRECTOR

C. Everett Koop, MD, SCD

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of Research!America, the nation's largest not for profit alliance working to make research to improve health a higher national priority, we are submitting recommendations in regard to your *Building a 21st Century Bioeconomy* initiative.

Research!America fully recognizes that, as stated in the Office of Science and Technology Policy's Request for Information (RFI), our nation is confronting "lean budget times." Our growing deficit is a threat to our country's future prosperity and the viability of the bioeconomy sector. We believe that reducing support for health and medical research at this critical time will not work to reduce the deficit; in fact, just the opposite would occur. Diminished investment in health and medical research would come at the expense of economic growth and runaway federal health care spending. That is why it is critical to include robust investment in such research as a key component of your Bioeconomy Initiative.

Innovation is the catalyst for economic growth, and health and medical research has proven itself again and again as an economic force in this country. A recent report by United for Medical Research found that in 2010, National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding generated more than 484,500 jobs and produced \$69 billion in economic activityⁱ. A report on the human genome project, prepared by the Batelle Technology Partnership Practice, reported that the initial government investment of \$3.8 billion has so far generated revenues of \$796 billion dollars.ⁱⁱ

In terms of deficit reduction, the nation cannot afford to ignore the ballooning costs of conditions like Alzheimer's, diabetes and obesity. Research supported by the NIH, CDC, NSF and AHRQ are essential to stem the massive increase in Medicare, Medicaid and VA spending that will occur in the absence of effective treatments.

Chronic diseases now account for over 75 percent of healthcare costs and are the main cause of the fast rising burden of healthcare throughout the world. Finding innovative solutions to reduce this burden will not only be the right thing for America to do but one of the most effective way to

1101 King Street
Suite 520
Alexandria, VA 22314-2960
P 703.739.2577
F 703.739.2372
E info@researchamerica.org
www.researchamerica.org

overcome the threatening impact of uncontrolled healthcare costs on our economic competitiveness.

Despite great scientific advances, our understanding of chronic diseases is still insufficient to be translated into revolutionary therapies. A bioeconomy for the 21st Century will require continued research investments despite budgetary constraints, as research offers the best hope to curtail the enormous costs bearing down on our nation.

Basic science supported by the National Institutes of Health and other health agencies at universities, academic medical centers and independent research institutions across the country lays the essential groundwork for biomedical products. If we neglect basic research, innovation will slow and the bioeconomy will not meet its full potential. Support for basic research sows the seeds for new business development, new products, and new jobs.

In addition to urging you to include robust funding for health and medical research as a key component of your Bioeconomy Initiative, we offer the following additional recommendations:

Support for the National Center for Advancing Translational Science (NCATS)

In recent years, basic researchers have made tremendous progress in identifying the molecular causes of disease – discoveries that have led to hundreds of potential new therapeutic targets. The rate at which these discoveries are moving from lab to the clinic has been very slow, however. It is estimated that therapies exist for just 200 of the more than 4,000 conditions with known molecular causes. The bottlenecks that exist in our translational pipeline slow the process, add expense and cause the American public to ask, with increasing urgency, why we are not making more progress with medical research. Research!America strongly supports the creation of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) at the NIH.

A strategic driving force of NCATS will be to generate innovative methods and technologies that will enhance the development, testing and implementation of diagnostics and therapeutics. An important goal is to significantly reduce what currently takes about 15 years from molecular discovery to new therapy. Fulfilling the mission of NCATS will require participation and partnership from academia, industry, patient advocacy groups, regulatory agencies and philanthropies in order to drive forward the science of translational medicine. NCAT's activities will complement, and not compete with, translational research being carried out in the private and public sectors today.

Advancing Regulatory Science Initiative (ARS)

Research!America commends the Administration for building on such programs as the Critical Path Initiative to explore how to improve the regulatory environment at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Whether it is developing viable models for assessing risks versus benefits or establishing new biomarkers to keep pace with rapidly evolving bioscience, better equipping FDA to fulfill its critical role can help speed safe and effective treatments to the market, bolstering the bioeconomy. Underfunding FDA is a surefire strategy for erasing

any progress made by improved regulatory science. Sufficient resources are a necessity if FDA is to assess new products on a timely basis.

Global Health Research and Development

Throughout the United States, investment in global health creates jobs and drives the economy. For example, Product Development Partnerships (PDPs), non-profit organizations that harness business, government, the philanthropic sector and the academic community to research and develop new life-saving health care technologies for the world's neglected diseases, are supplying jobs and revenue in the United States. The New Jersey based company, Temptime Corporation, partnered with the product development partnership PATH and USAID to develop color changing stickers to determine if vaccines are still effective after shipment. These stickers are used around the world. Importantly, they are now being used locally; for example, in 2009 H1N1 vaccines all came with the Temptime stickers. Global health R&D funding also led to a Chicago researcher's discovery of today's primary treatment for bladder cancer—the tuberculosis vaccine BCG. These are just two of many illustrations of how investing in research to boost the bioeconomy bears fruit, whether that research is focused on domestic or global issues.

Thank you, Mr. President, for promoting the bioeconomy as critical to our nation's prosperity now and in the future, and for considering our view that robust funding for medical research is a sound strategy for furthering your goals. We stand ready to assist you and the OSTP in further shaping and executing your time-sensitive initiative.

Sincerely,



Mary Woolley
President

ⁱ United for Medical Research Report. "An Economic Engine." Published Fall 2011

ⁱⁱ Battelle Technology Partnership Practice. "Economic Impact of the Human Genome Project." Prepared May 2011