



July 16, 2021

Dr. Eric Lander
Director
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20504

Dear Dr. Lander,

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.

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

cc: Kei Koizumi, Chief of Staff, Office of Science and Technology Policy