



Serving as Friends of the National Eye Institute

Recognizing the *Decade of Vision 2010-2020 Initiative*

December 2, 2016

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander:

On behalf of the vision research community, I am writing to express our continued support for the 21st Century Cures Act, H.R. 6, as the Senate considers the legislation this week. NAEVR was pleased to have been included in past listening sessions regarding the Senate "Innovation" package. NAEVR had sent a similar letter to House Energy & Commerce Chairman Upton early last week prior to the successful House passage.

Since vision loss is a co-morbid condition of numerous diseases, 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,

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