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April 24, 2025

The Honorable Jay Bhattacharya
National Institutes of Health Director
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Director Bhattacharya:

The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) represents over 100 cancer centers throughout the United States, including the 73 cancer centers that hold National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation. On behalf of these cancer centers, AACI congratulates you on your confirmation as director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We recognize the profound responsibility of this role to improve the health of all Americans, and we are eager to collaborate with you and the Trump Administration to accelerate breakthroughs—and cures—for many types of cancer.

With the passage of the National Cancer Act in 1971, President Nixon and Congress established the Cancer Centers Program under the purview of the NCI. The Cancer Centers Program provides a unique, national infrastructure to recognize institutions that excel in laboratory and clinical research, enabling Americans to live longer, healthier lives. In fact, patients treated at NCI-Designated Cancer Centers have a 25 percent greater chance of survival compared to those treated at other cancer centers. Key to the program's success is a robust NCI workforce, including contract employees who enhance the quality of cancer research through critical data collection, management, and reporting of cancer cases.

At the heart of the Cancer Centers Program is a complex network of institutions spanning 37 states and the District of Columbia. These cancer centers are located in rural, frontier, and urban areas in red and blue states. Some specialize in areas such as pediatric cancer, while others focus on basic science research that translates into tomorrow's treatments and cures. Though no two NCI-Designated Cancer Centers are the same, they are unified by the rigorous quality standards upheld by the Cancer Centers Program.

Representatives from AACI and NCI-Designated Cancer Centers look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss the value of the Cancer Centers Program. We strongly believe that the program can be a powerful asset in the Trump Administration's pursuit of groundbreaking cancer discoveries and can serve as a model for tackling the toughest chronic illnesses facing Americans.

As a champion of our nation's Cancer Centers Program, AACI is deeply concerned about the policy change proposed by the NIH, to move all grant reviews to the Center for Scientific Review beginning in January 2026. We firmly believe that

the review process for the NCI's Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) is critical to ensuring the continued excellence of the Cancer Centers Program. As currently constructed, competitive CCSG reviews provide an opportunity for cancer centers to demonstrate broad institutional commitment to multidisciplinary cancer research and substantive progress in meeting their lifesaving missions. Guided by the stringent criteria set forth by the Cancer Centers Program, NCI-Designated Cancer Centers are eligible for CCSG renewal every five years. The new constraints put into place through centralized review, including the elimination of site visits, will limit the centers' ability to leverage investments made by the NIH that have benefited people with cancer for decades.

As a direct result of NIH investments, the mortality rate from cancer has declined by 34 percent from 1991 to 2022, averting approximately 4.5 million deaths. Despite this significant progress, more than 600,000 Americans will die of cancer and over 2 million more will receive a cancer diagnosis this year.

On behalf of the millions of Americans affected by cancer, we stand ready to work with the NIH under your leadership. AACI and NCI-Designated Cancer Centers will continue "Turning Discovery Into Health" through our mutual commitment to cancer research that improves patients' lives, and we hope you will join us in this effort.

Sincerely,

Jennifer W. Pegher, MA, MBA

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