

November 20, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Alexander,

On behalf of Vanderbilt University (VU) and Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC), we applaud the bipartisan budget agreement enacted earlier this summer that allows for additional investment in both non-defense and defense discretionary programs, including programs supporting scientific research, public health, and education. Congress now must finish its work and finalize funding for FY 2020. We urge you and your colleagues to complete this work as soon as possible and to avoid a scenario that could lead to a full-year Continuing Resolution (CR) for some or all 12 of the individual appropriations bills.

Continuing resolutions, when extended beyond the span of a few months, can have considerable negative impacts on the nation's research enterprise. As funding decisions for new grants are put on hold at federal science agencies, uncertainty about final funding levels can have a coercive follow-on effect at universities and academic medical centers, leading to postponement of scientific projects and training. Under a flat funding, full-year CR scenario, science suffers greatly both through the regular erosion of purchasing power due to inflation and an absence of additional investment for big new initiatives.

We commend the significant investments Congress has made in recent years to invigorate research activities, including historic increases in funding for the National Institutes of Health, National Labs, and several other areas. Together, VU and VUMC received more than \$657 million last year in federal research funding. This support is critical to Vanderbilt researchers and students as they endeavor to make fundamental scientific discoveries; develop new technologies, medical therapies and cures; and partner with government agencies in advancing the public health and national defense.

We believe that sustained, steady growth in scientific research, student aid and public health are vital to ensuring our global technological leadership as well as protecting our nation's economy and national security. In particular, we applaud proposed FY 2020 funding increases for extramural programs at the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Departments of Energy and Defense, among others. We urge Congress to support the highest levels of funding for student aid, research, and public health programs already included in the House or Senate FY 2020 appropriations bills.

Thank you for your support for Vanderbilt and the groundbreaking work taking place in our labs, clinics, and classrooms. We are proud of the contributions Vanderbilt is making to our community and to our country. We look forward to working with you to ensure robust support for these activities continue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey R. Balsler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey R. Balsler, M.D., Ph.D.
President and CEO
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Susan R. Wentz', written in a cursive style.

Susan R. Wentz
Interim Chancellor and Provost
Vanderbilt University