

March 2, 2018

The Honorable Scott Taylor
U.S. House of Representatives
412 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 2015

Dear Congressman Taylor,

On behalf of the University of Virginia's School of Medicine, thank you for the opportunity to submit our FY 2019 programmatic funding request for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I write to urge your support to fund the NIH at a minimum of \$38.4 billion in FY 2019, including funds provided to the agency through the 21st Century Cures Act for targeted initiatives. This funding level would continue a trajectory of \$2 billion increases for the NIH each year, allowing for meaningful growth above inflation in the base budget that would expand NIH's capacity to support promising science in all disciplines. The level would also ensure that the Innovation Account supplements the agency's base budget, as intended, through dedicated funding for specific programs.

As you know, the NIH has supported biomedical research to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability for more than 100 years. More than 80 percent of the NIH's budget is competitively awarded through more than 57,000 research and training grants to more than 300,000 researchers at over 2500 universities and research institutions located in every state and the District of Columbia. According to NIH's Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tool, in FY 2017, *the NIH awarded \$377 million in 833 grants and contracts to Virginia. The University of Virginia received 340 awards for a total of \$139 million—of which a majority went to the School of Medicine.* UVA School of Medicine ranks 40th in the country in terms of the NIH's funding to all medical schools.

Below are a few examples of how NIH funded research at the UVA School of Medicine is advancing the health of the Commonwealth and the nation:

- UVA neurosurgeon Jeff Elias, MD, leads research in the use of focused ultrasound as a scalpel-free alternative to traditional brain surgery for essential tremor, a condition that often leaves patients unable to write legibly or eat without spilling. Thanks in part to the support of the NIH, his years of work led to federal Food and Drug Administration approval for the use of focused ultrasound to treat essential tremor. UVA researchers are now testing the potential of focused ultrasound to treat conditions ranging from Parkinson's disease to epilepsy to breast cancer.
- A research team led by UVA neuroscientist Jonathan Kipnis, PhD, overturned decades of textbook teaching by discovering a direct connection between the brain and the immune system. This NIH-funded discovery could have a significant impact on the understanding and treatment of neurological diseases ranging from autism to Alzheimer's disease to multiple sclerosis.

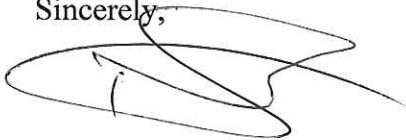
- Researchers at the UVA Center for Diabetes Technology led by Boris Kovatchev, PhD, have developed an artificial pancreas to automatically monitor and regulate blood-sugar levels in people with Type 1 diabetes. The goal: eliminate the need for people with Type 1 diabetes to stick their fingers multiple times daily to check their blood-sugar levels and to inject insulin manually. The device is now undergoing its final tests in clinical trials supported by the NIH.

Of course, medical research enhances more than the health of the United States. It also boosts the economic health of our nation and communities. According to United for Medical Research, research funded by the NIH in FY 2017 directly and indirectly supported more than 400,000 jobs. The income generated by these jobs as well as by the purchase of research related equipment, services, and materials, when cycled through the economy produced nearly \$69 billion in new economic activity across the United States. *In Virginia, 5,765 jobs were supported by NIH extramural research in FY 2017, providing over \$1 billion in economic activity.*

Investments in science and innovation are critical if we are to continue to meet current and emerging health challenges, improve the Commonwealth and the nation's physical and fiscal health, and sustain our leadership in medical research. In order to remain global leaders in accelerating the development of life-changing cures, pioneering treatments, and innovative prevention strategies, it is essential that Congress sustain predictable increases in the NIH budget.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David S. Wilkes", written over a white background.

David S. Wilkes, MD
Dean, UVA School of Medicine
James Carroll Flippin Professor of Medical Science