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December 4, 2015

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

by email to brenda_destro@cassidy.senate.gov

Dear Senator Cassidy:

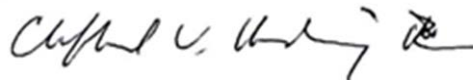
The American Association of Immunologists (AAI), the largest professional association of immunologists in the world, thanks you for your strong support for increased funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). As a physician, you understand well the value of funding basic biomedical research and the importance of such research to discovering tomorrow's treatments and cures. We are, however, concerned about your recent efforts to legislate the re-allocation of funding within the NIH portfolio.

AAI believes that scientific discovery most quickly advances when NIH leadership, in consultation with the scientific community, is able to decide how to allocate funds. Providing NIH with this flexibility facilitates our ability to address emerging research needs, support ripe scientific opportunities, and enhance high quality stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

AAI recognizes that Congress has oversight authority over NIH, and agrees that NIH has an ongoing responsibility to reevaluate its research portfolio (including whether historical levels of support for particular kinds of research continue to be warranted). We understand that NIH, in developing its first strategic plan (which will be submitted to Congress later this month), has been examining how disease burden should influence NIH priority setting. AAI looks forward to reviewing this plan.

AAI appreciates your strong support for NIH and the biomedical research enterprise, and hopes you will work with us to ensure that NIH research priority setting is driven by the collective wisdom of our nation's scientific community. Kindly contact me (cvh3@cwru.edu) or Lauren Gross, J.D., AAI Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs (lgross@aai.org), if AAI can be of any assistance to you on any other matter.

Sincerely,



Clifford V. Harding, M.D., Ph.D.
Chair, AAI Committee on Public Affairs