May 1, 2019

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro:

Thank you for your support of kidney disease patients by funding the Kidney Innovation Accelerator (KidneyX) at $10 million, the National Institutes of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) at $2.129 billion and Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at $1.073 billion, which provides funding for the CDC Chronic Kidney Disease Initiative.

The American Kidney Fund (AKF) is the nation's leading independent nonprofit organization working on behalf of the more than 30 million Americans with kidney disease. For the past half-century, AKF has existed to help people fight kidney disease and live healthier lives. We provide a complete spectrum of programs and services: top-rated education materials; free kidney disease screenings in numerous cities across the nation; clinical research funding; and need-based financial assistance enabling one in five U.S. dialysis patients to access lifesaving medical care, including dialysis and transplantation.

As you know, kidney disease is reaching epidemic proportions. 30 million Americans have kidney disease, and it is now the 9th leading cause of death in the United States. There are 495,000 people on dialysis and nearly 208,000 are living with kidney transplants. Each month, about 10,000 new cases of kidney failure are diagnosed. Investment in understanding this disease and finding better treatments is crucial.

In the past 40 years, there have been no significant changes in the way that end-stage renal disease (ESRD) is treated. The two options continue to be dialysis or transplant. There have also been no significant advances in dialysis treatment in that time, which is why the funding of KidneyX is vital. The public-private partnership has already resulted in the awarding of financial prizes for fifteen projects that focus on making dialysis better for the patient, creating hope and excitement in a field that has not seen new developments in decades. We are truly grateful that you understand the need for the investment into improving the lives of kidney failure patients.

In addition to finding new ways to improve dialysis for ESRD patients, AKF firmly believes that more research is needed to find a cure. Chronic kidney disease rates are increasing faster than other noncommunicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease and cancer, when comparing healthy-years lost; deaths due to chronic kidney disease increased 58 percent between 2002 and 2016.¹ We appreciate the $2.1 billion in funding for the NIDDK, a nearly 5 percent increase from last year. Researchers need funding to better understand the structure of the kidney and why it can be susceptible to disease and failure; this knowledge
can be translated into better outcomes for patients. I encourage you and your committee to continue to increase funding for kidney disease research, as the NIH spends substantially less per capita on kidney patients. In 2014, the NIH spent $29 per patient per year for kidney disease, while it spent $61 for heart disease, $568 for cancer, and $3,064 for HIV/AIDS.\(^8\) As we can see the investments in the other diseases has led to longer life-spans and better qualities of life for individuals with those diseases. Your promotion of kidney research will ultimately result in those benefits for kidney patients.

Nearly half of new cases of kidney failure are caused by diabetes, and about a quarter of the new cases are caused by hypertension. Those percentages mean that almost two-thirds of new kidney failure cases could be prevented with better primary care, nutrition, exercise, and managing diabetes and high-blood pressure. Your support of the funding for the CDC Chronic Kidney Disease Initiative helps increase public awareness of kidney disease, the importance of getting tested, and the need to make lifestyle changes to delay or avoid chronic kidney disease.

Once again, thank you for your leadership on addressing chronic kidney disease by funding programs that call for innovation, scientific knowledge and public awareness. I look forward to working with you to finding a cure for the 9\(^{th}\) leading cause of death in the United States.

Sincerely,

LaVarne A. Burton
President and CEO

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