

**Testimony of David A. Tuveson, MD, PhD, FAACR**

**President, American Association for Cancer Research**

**Fiscal Year 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies**

**Public Witness Day Hearing**

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Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for having me. I am Dr. David Tuveson, Director of the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Cancer Center and Chief Scientist for the Lustgarten Foundation, the largest pancreatic cancer research philanthropic organization. Today, I am here as President of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). On behalf of the AACR's 48,000 members, I ask for your support for at least \$46.1 billion in FY 2022 funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and \$7.6 billion for the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

We are in an era of unprecedented progress against cancer, including advances in immunotherapies and targeted anti-cancer therapies that led to spectacular decreases in cancer mortality. Thanks to investments at the NCI, we have new tools at our disposal that could only be dreamed of decades ago to maximize advances in early diagnosis of many types of cancer and offer highly effective treatments that improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities. Additionally, the funding that NCI provides to the NCI-designated cancer centers that are located all throughout the country is supporting pioneering new research, serving patients in their communities, and training the next generation of cancer scientists.

There are so many breakthroughs within our grasp, but to achieve them, we need federal investments to keep up with demand on basic research for cancer.

That's what brings me here today.

Since FY 2015, thanks to your leadership, NIH funding has increased by nearly 42%. But due to other funding needs at NIH, including worthy initiatives that take away from the top line, and a nearly 50% increase in applications at NCI since 2013, the funding increases have not kept up with demand.

Even with the significant funding you have provided, the percent of NCI grant applications that are funded, referred to as the success rate, is among the lowest of all institutes at NIH. In FY 2020, the NIH-wide success rate for competing research project grants, or RPGs, was nearly 21%. For NCI, it was only 12.8%, and that's the highest NCI's success rate has been in six years.

NCI has been stretching dollars to fund more grants. NCI Director, Dr. Sharpless, released his 15-by-25 milestone, an effort to increase the number of R01 grants funded until it reaches the 15<sup>th</sup> percentile in 2025. The AACR strongly supports this important mission, but to achieve the goal of funding more meritorious research, more funding will be needed.

While the success rate of an RPG at NHLBI is 22.2%, and NIDDK is 23%, NIAID is 23.9%, and the National Institute on Aging is 25.8%, NCI's rate of 12.8% is not sustainable to meet our

pledge to apply new cancer science and medicine towards improving patient outcomes. With the low success rate, I worry the best and the brightest, in particular early-stage researchers, will choose other career paths. The United States cannot lead the world in cancer discoveries if the NCI success rate is so low that researchers choose another field.

Thanks to your leadership, language was included in the last two explanatory statements to prioritize competing grants and sustain commitments to continuing grants. I humbly ask you to continue these efforts in FY 2022 and provide funding to meet Dr. Sharpless' goal so the cancer research community can accelerate the path to discoveries and save lives.

I know cancer is personal for you, as it is for me. Thank you for this opportunity and for your commitment to bringing us closer to our mutual goal of conquering cancer.