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Dr. Francis Collins  
Director, National Institutes of Health  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dr. Harold Varmus  
Director, National Cancer Institute  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Collins and Dr. Varmus,

I write you today inviting you to visit Buffalo and Western New York this year to learn more about the many opportunities and challenges facing the region's biomedical research community. The institutions and firms here have had a marked impact on our nation's biomedical research enterprise in the past and are able to attribute a significant amount of their success to a sustained federal investment and support from the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute. Yet as I heard at a meeting with the Deputy Secretary this week, which reiterated sentiments I have heard in the past, significant challenges exist toward making potential innovations a reality for patients. I would be honored for you to visit, both to learn from the experiences of these institutions, but to work with them in preparing for and dealing with the challenges of the future.

As you know, the challenges to the biomedical research enterprise are ongoing. Too many promising research grants go unfunded because of a dearth of funding. Too many promising ideas fail to go to market because of a lack of venture capital and the high costs of clinical trials. And once products come to market, they are often so expensive that many simply can't afford them. Many firms in my district have argued that the often convoluted and conflicted regulatory burden inhibit their ability to bring products to market. These challenges will only grow in the future and I hope to work with you on addressing them.

These challenges are intensified in Western New York as investments at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus have translated into engines of economic growth. Already the BNMC Innovation Center and the Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics act as critical public-private incubators in commercializing the tremendous potential of the institutions there. The firms that reside there are experiencing growth and expansion of commercial space is already planned. And many of our other manufacturers are expanding into the health field as a strong area of growth. They are catalysts for the region. Yet the ability of the biomedical research enterprise to be nimble to advancements coming through the pipeline is crucial for future growth. I plan to remain vigilant to any challenges, and I urge you to do the same.

The Western New York region has long understood that the promise of our economic future lies within supporting institutions that have a consistent track record of success in the past. Roswell Park Cancer

Institute, as the first comprehensive cancer center in the United States as well as Upstate New York's only NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center, has always been at the vanguard of cancer research. The Hauptman Woodward Institute is a worldwide leader in crystallization, Kaleida Health's new Gates Vascular Institute establishes a new paradigm for care with collaborative environment where physicians and research scientists will work side-by-side to integrate technology and improved practice patterns in patient care across disciplines. The GVI will be housed in the same facility as the University at Buffalo's Clinical and Translational Research Center, bringing UB's world class research enterprise to the Medical Campus to complement the health care system.

The developments at the Medical Campus are merely the foundation of what is to come. The University at Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences will shortly begin a major move to the Medical Campus, bringing thousands of students, faculty, and staff to the downtown campus. This development will dramatically increase the level of energy in the neighborhood and unleash significant potential to improving patient care and translating research discoveries into products that can alleviate suffering and improve life quality.

But as I have consistently heard from the health community in Western New York, the ability of the federal government to be a proactive partner with our local institutions and firms will be a determinant of their success. I look forward to working with you on this effort and to helping you plan your visit to Buffalo.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS  
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services  
The Honorable Bill Corr, Deputy Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services