

BRIAN HIGGINS
27TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
SELECT REVENUE MEASURES
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REVITALIZING OLDER CITIES
TASK FORCE
CO-CHAIR

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

HOUSE CANCER CAUCUS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3227

January 24, 2010

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
431 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3306
(202) 226-0347 (FAX)

WESTERN NEW YORK OFFICES:
LARKIN BUILDING
726 EXCHANGE STREET
SUITE 601
BUFFALO, NY 14210
(716) 852-3501
(716) 852-3929 (FAX)

FENTON BUILDING
2 EAST 2ND STREET
SUITE 300
JAMESTOWN, NY 14701
(716) 484-0729
(716) 484-1049 (FAX)
higgins.house.gov

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

On February 26, 2009, I wrote responding to your strong remarks made in an address to Congress in which you stated a commitment to doubling funding for cancer research during your tenure. I was encouraged by your commitment then, and I remain so now, because I have long argued that finding a cure to cancer should not only be a goal of Congress, it should be America's goal.

Since that time, with your leadership, we have made great strides to provide the health community more tools to fight cancer. Through an impressive investment of over 10 billion dollars, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act recognized the critical role research has in stimulating both economic investment and improving quality of life. Investment in research directly supports at least 350,000 jobs and leads to the creation of thousands of small businesses every year as discoveries are brought to market. This is particularly important to my community in Western New York, home to Roswell Park Cancer Institute and countless innovation firms striving to improve the lives of cancer patients. It is estimated that the overall cost of cancer in our country in 2010 alone was \$263 billion, so the need for this work has never been more necessary.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act made groundbreaking progress toward improving the experience cancer patients have in our often fractured and confusing health care system – no longer can a cancer patient be denied coverage, have their coverage rescinded arbitrarily, or reach an annual or lifetime limit for coverage. With the creation of health insurance exchanges, offering affordable and comprehensive health care coverage to those without adequate coverage, we have set a benchmark that will stabilize and standardize insurance over time, ensuring that when citizens need coverage because of experiences with a disease like cancer, they will be able to rely on it. It will now be easier for cancer patients to enroll in clinical trials. And for seniors with cancer, the Affordable Care Act drastically improves prescription drug coverage by closing the Medicare Part D donut hole – making smart drugs more easily accessible.

That said, as you know, our work is far from over and I believe we are at the precipice of a new generation of treatments that will revolutionize how cancer patients get treated. Projects like the Cancer Genome Atlas, a collaboration between the National Cancer Institute and the National Human Genome Research Institute, hold significant promise to help us better understand the molecular basis of cancer and facilitate new research and treatments. Renewed efforts to stimulate clinical and

translational research are critical as well, especially in this turbulent economic climate. And we need to continue to educate and make preventative screening accessible to all Americans, especially those that are hardest to reach, so that we can catch cancer before it spreads.

I am under no illusion that this year and the year following will be a challenging one for our government's finances. But I urge you to hold firm on your resolve to fight for research funding within our Nation's Cancer Program. These investments, while small, have ripple effects that last generations and improve the lives of millions. During a time such as now, where we face so many challenges, this resolve and commitment could not be more critical.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress