

November 18, 2021

Eric Lander, Ph.D.
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President

Norman E. “Ned” Sharpless, M.D.
Director, National Cancer Institute
National Institutes of Health

Via email: eric.s.lander@ostp.eop.gov; norman.sharpless@nih.gov

Dear Drs. Lander and Sharpless,

Thank you for your service to our nation’s health and research innovation. We, the undersigned organizations and professionals, are writing to you today about a matter of great importance and shared concern for all of us: Improving our country’s investment in cancer research and prevention.

As you know, cancer remains the second-leading cause of death in the U.S.—same as it was five decades ago at the beginning of the U.S. “war on cancer.” Decreases in cancer rates over the past two decades are attributed primarily to personal preventative measures including refraining from cigarette smoking, eating more fruits and vegetables, and getting regular checkups for screening, rather than to the results of biomedical research, which consumes the vast majority of the National Cancer Institute’s budget.

We are particularly concerned that the National Cancer Institute’s continued funding of cancer experiments on animals is hampering progress in this area and we urge you and your staff to take the following actions:

1. Reallocate National Institutes of Health intramural and extramural research funding toward animal-free, human-relevant models.
2. Convene or commission an unbiased committee in order to review the translatability of cancer research and carcinogenicity assessment in animals to human patients.
3. Provide opportunities for regulators and researchers to receive free training and education on the use of human-relevant models.
4. Adopt legislation in order to replace outdated requirements of the lifetime tests on rats and mice for carcinogenicity assessment with rapid, reliable, and human-relevant models.
5. Increase the amount of federal funding allocated to cancer prevention.

Thank you. We would be happy to discuss this with you further.

Sincerely,

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