December 2, 2022

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leaders McConnell and McCarthy:

On behalf of the Society for Women’s Health Research (SWHR) – a more than 30-year-old national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting research on biological sex differences in disease and improving women’s health through science, policy, and education – I would like to thank you for your efforts over the past year, as we have worked as a nation to tackle COVID-19 and to support our public health ecosystem. Since its founding in 1990, SWHR has worked to address unmet needs and research gaps in women’s health. This includes ensuring that sex and gender influences in health and disease are considered in research, promoting policies that support women in the biomedical research workforce, and identifying and addressing gaps across research, clinical care, and policy.

While we recognize there are hurdles that will need to be overcome to finalize fiscal year 2023 appropriations legislation before the December 16 deadline, advancing spending legislation will be critical to support federal research and public health priorities. In September, SWHR joined the Friends of the Office of Research on Women’s Health Executive Committee on a letter to House and Senate Appropriations Committee leadership calling attention to the harmful short- and long-term effects of continuing resolutions on the scientific enterprise and the need for steady, timely investments into our nation’s scientific enterprise.

As you engage in conversations surrounding final fiscal year 2023 spending legislation and outstanding priorities for the 117th Congress, SWHR would like to call attention to congressional initiatives that, once enacted, could improve health and quality of life outcomes for women across the lifespan:
• **Providing Robust Funding Increases for Federal Research Entities that Support Women-Centric Research.** The lack of prioritization for women’s health research has not only affected our understanding about key aspects of women’s health and overlooked a critical portion of the population, but it has also amounted to a tremendous amount of money lost for the U.S. economy. Robust, sustained funding for federal research entities that prioritize research into diseases, conditions, and life stages that differently, disproportionately, or solely affect women across the lifespan is critical to achieve health equity for women. While SWHR believes that all federal research is complementary and thus supports increased funding across all federal research and public health entities, SWHR would urge providing the following funding levels in final fiscal year 2023 spending legislation:
  
  o A program level of at least $49 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH)
  o At least $62.5 million for the Office of Research on Women’s Health (ORWH)
  o $1.816 billion for the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

• **Stephanie Tubbs Jones Uterine Fibroid Research and Education Act (H.R. 2007/S. 2444).** Uterine fibroids, non-malignant growths of the uterus, are one of the most common gynecological conditions nationwide, affecting about 26 million American women ages 15 to 50, and they are an overlooked public health issue. This bill would increase research funding for uterine fibroids, improve awareness and training, and seek to measure cost to government payers. Learn more.

• **Endometriosis CARE Act of 2022 (H.R. 7974).** Endometriosis affects more than 1 in 10 reproductive-aged women in the United States and can be painful and disruptive. The Endometriosis CARE Act would provide increased investments in endometriosis research through the NIH, identify barriers for accessing treatment, and create a national campaign to raise public awareness of endometriosis. Learn more.

• **Diversifying Investigations Via Equitable Research Studies for Everyone (DIVERSE) Trials Act (H.R. 5030/S. 2706).** Ensuring that clinical trials reflect the treatment population for whom they are intended to serve is key to improving health outcomes across different populations. The DIVERSE Trials Act, through provisions such as requiring the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to issue guidance on how to conduct decentralized clinical trials to improve trial access to communities of color and building on the CARES Act data collection requirements, could help reduce barriers to clinical trial enrollment and ultimately increase diversity in clinical trials. Learn more.

• **Increasing Access to Osteoporosis Testing for Medicare Beneficiaries Act (H.R. 3517/S. 1943).** A 2022 article from SWHR in the Journal of Women’s Health Research called attention to the importance of dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA)
screening in assessing bone mineral density (BMD) and therein, “as a tool for prevention and early diagnosis of osteoporosis and fracture.” However, “Due to CMS reimbursement cuts for DXA scans, the number of providers who can perform DXA scans has dwindled, and machines are no longer common in provider offices.” The Increasing Access to Osteoporosis Testing for Medicare Beneficiaries Act would improve access to, and utilization of, bone mass measurement benefits under part B of the Medicare program. Learn more about the bill here. Read SWHR’s bone health white paper here and our policy agenda here.

- **Concentrating on High-value Alzheimer’s Needs to Get to an End (CHANGE) Act of 2021** (H.R. 3354/S. 1692). According to UsAgainstAlzheimer’s, studies indicate that fewer than half of patients with dementia have been diagnosed by a physician. The CHANGE Act expands the cognitive impairment detection benefit during the Medicare Annual Wellness Visit to require the use of evidence-based detection tools and documentation of the results in the patient’s medical record.

While we recognize that there are many legislative priorities to tackle prior to the end of the year, SWHR sees the above as important opportunities to advance the health and well-being of women across the lifespan. Supporting women and the broader U.S. population through these investments represents an investment in our nation’s future. Therefore, we ask that you work swiftly to pass a fiscal year 2023 omnibus spending bill that prioritizes our nation’s federal research and public health agencies and, notably, the health of women.

We thank you for your work over the past year and stand ready to assist you and your teams in any way possible as you work to advance these final pieces of legislation this year. If you have questions or if there is anything SWHR can do to be of assistance at this time, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kathryn G. Schubert, MPP
President and CEO
Society for Women’s Health Research