

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 8, 2013

Dr. Francis Collins
Director
The National Institutes of Health
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
One Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892-0160

Dr. Gary Gibbons
Director
The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
One Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892-0160

Re: The Women's Health Initiative

Dear Director Collins and Dr. Gibbons:

The Women's Health Initiative (WHI) is a uniquely valuable, irreplaceable national asset in the study and improvement of women's health. We write to express our support for this program.

The WHI is the largest, most ambitious clinical research program ever conducted. More than 161,000 postmenopausal women were recruited at 40 prestigious academic research centers across the country in the mid-1990s. More than 90,000 of these women are still alive and in active follow-up. With the mission of filling many of the gaps in our knowledge of women's health, the original focus of the WHI was three randomized clinical trials testing the effects of hormone therapy, diet and calcium/vitamin D on the health of postmenopausal women.

These clinical trials produced practical results. The most dramatic findings were from the estrogen plus progestin trial which showed that combined hormone therapy increased the risk of breast cancer, stroke, heart disease and blood clots. The impact of these findings was a rapid 50 percent reduction in the use of these medications. This was followed by the first-ever reduction in breast cancer nationally. Now, an estimated 15,000 fewer women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year because fewer women are using these hormones. The projected economic impact of this trial is a \$35 billion reduction in direct medical expenses over the 10 years following the release of the results.

The well-established WHI infrastructure provides a cost-effective, highly-credible resource for continuing, substantial research on women's health, aging, chronic disease prevention and early detection. WHI investigators, their colleagues and other independent investigators have

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leveraged the WHI resource to initiate 209 separately funded research projects and publish more than 850 articles in scientific/medical journals.

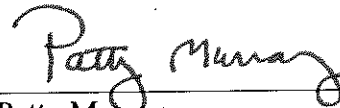
More WHI discoveries are on the horizon for women across the country. WHI investigators continue to develop new randomized trials which would provide rigorous and cost efficient evaluations of public health interventions such as multivitamins, higher dose vitamin D supplements, and physical activity promotion in elderly women. WHI investigators have also recently initiated a large study in some of the more than 24,000 WHI participants diagnosed with cancer to investigate approaches to improve cancer treatment and outcomes. Study of Alzheimer's disease, dementia also continues as the cohort ages into ranges where these conditions emerge in greater numbers.

We look forward to the continuation of this worthwhile program, and the national health and economic benefits it brings.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



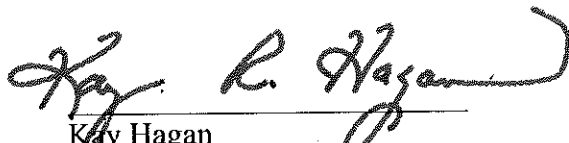
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