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March 12, 2008

Dear Senator:

I am writing on behalf of the Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC) to urge your support for the amendment to the FY 2009 Budget Resolution (S. Con.Res. 70) offered by Senators Specter and Harkin to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by \$2.1 billion. This increased funding is critical to the nation's biomedical research enterprise. The AAHC, a national, nonprofit organization representing more than 100 academic health centers, is dedicated to improving the nation's health care system by mobilizing and enhancing the strengths and resources of the academic health center enterprise in health professions education, patient care, and research.

NIH is a global leader in medical research and advancements in clinical care. Support for the nation's research agenda, led by the NIH and taking place within academic health centers across the country, is vital to sustaining America's preeminence in science. Inadequate funding for NIH research threatens the search for new treatments and cures for diseases and chronic conditions that will benefit populations in the U.S. and around the globe. The opportunity costs associated with inadequate funding are incalculable in terms of the nation's economy and the lost productivity and health care costs that result from illness, disease, and disability.

Federal funding for the NIH has been eroding since 2003. Annual appropriations have not kept pace with inflation, resulting in a loss of more than 10 percent in NIH's purchasing power. The practical effect of this funding policy is that some new and promising research proposals will not be funded and some ongoing research will not be sustained.

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We recognize that you are under significant pressure to address a broad range of needs. However, we believe that support for biomedical research is a priority concern for our nation. We ask for your support and look forward to working with you in addressing this pressing need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven A. Wartman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steven A. Wartman, MD, PhD
President/CEO