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February 23, 2009

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Dr. John Niederhuber
National Cancer Institute
31 Center Drive, MSC 2590
Building 31, Room 11A48
Bethesda, MD 20892-2590

Dr. Niederhuber:

I wanted to take a moment to introduce you to a newly formed non-profit cancer advocacy group, Fund A Cure for Pancreatic Cancer. Our main goal is to move the organization that you lead, the National Cancer Institute, to more fairly and adequately fund pancreatic cancer research in the very near future, at least to the same level of federal research funding that other less deadly and more widely known diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Breast Cancer receive each year. The current funding your organization allocates towards pancreatic cancer research each year, 74 million, is woefully inadequate given pancreatic cancer's survival rate of only 1% and yearly death toll in the U.S. of 34,000 which is twice that of HIV/AIDS.

As you are well aware the recently passed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act contains nearly \$10 billion for the National Institutes of Health, thanks in large part to the lobbying of Senator Arlen Specter. Our organization met with Senator Specter in November 2008 at his office in Washington to discuss how under funded pancreatic cancer research currently is by your organization and asked him to assist with our effort to increase funding dramatically to sponsor more research into early detection methods and advanced treatment options for pancreatic cancer through the appropriations process. Now that these extra appropriations will be coming to NIH our organization asks you to use a large portion of this funding to increase funding of pancreatic cancer research at least to the level of breast cancer research which is currently nearly \$600 million a year.

While I realize you have a personal connection to the fight against breast cancer, I'm sure you are well aware that the current 5 year survival rates are near 90% for this disease as compared to the 5% five year survival rate for pancreatic cancer, a disease that usually takes patient's lives in only 6 months. I too have a personal

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connection to the breast cancer cause having lost my mother who was only 58 to this disease in 2004. However, after she passed my family and I did not feel immediately compelled to start a non-profit advocacy group to fight for more breast cancer research dollars given the enormous attention and both private and public funding mechanisms available to contribute towards future research.

During my father's 20 month fight with pancreatic cancer I was disappointed to learn how the National Cancer Institute and the federal government in general had severely underfunded research towards pancreatic cancer and how it was dwarfed by funding for much less aggressive and deadly diseases. Fund A Cure for Pancreatic Cancer was formed with the assistance of others who had lost a loved one to this disease to raise awareness of how deadly pancreatic cancer is, how many U.S. lives it takes in comparison to other more well known diseases such as HIV/AIDS and breast cancer, and how the federal government has shirked its obligation to do everything possible to increase long term survival rates from where they were 40 years ago (1%).

You have the power and authority to change the outcomes for future generations who will be stricken by this disease. The opportunity is in front of you and other leaders in the fight against cancer such as Senator Specter. You can decide it is of the utmost ethical duty to bring pancreatic cancer research up to the levels of HIV/AIDS and breast cancer in terms of dollars spent, which will attract a whole new set of minds to this disease. Our organization pleads with you to not let this opportunity slip away.

I do not wish to have to write to you in the future if change is not made with regards to funding when I may be stricken with this disease and have to watch my two daughters struggle as I suffer from this disease in front of their eyes.

We look forward to your detailed response to this letter. You have the ability to make a difference with pancreatic cancer research. I ask that you use that ability given this unique opportunity.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Ciervo, Ph.D., Founder and Chairman
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cc: U.S. Senator Arlen Specter
Mr. Scott Hoeflich, Chief of Staff for U.S. Senator Arlen Specter

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