

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 30, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Adam H. Russell
Acting Deputy Director
Advanced Research Project Agency for Health
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra and Acting Deputy Director Russell,

We look forward to working with you as you begin to stand up the new Advanced Research Project Agency for Health (ARPA-H), as proposed by President Biden and funded by the Fiscal Year 2022 omnibus appropriations law. We believe this bold new initiative holds great promise to improve the speed of biomedical and health research, unlocking new cures and treatments for patients diagnosed with cancer, ALS, and other life-threatening diseases and conditions.

As you work to stand up this agency, we urge you to consider the state of Illinois—and the Chicago area in particular—as an ideal partner to house the geographic footprint, and maximize the research and partnerships impact, of ARPA-H. From first-in-class scientific infrastructure, to diverse and highly-skilled talent, to a multi-billion dollar investment pipeline that ARPA-H can help shape, we believe that locating ARPA-H in the Chicago region would help the agency best fulfill its mission to have a transformational impact on the health landscape of the country and propel our shared goals of centering health equity and catalyzing improbable health breakthroughs.

Location

The Chicago area has much to contribute toward advancing ARPA-H's mission of taking “outside-the-box” ideas and innovations—leveraged by unconventional partnerships and technologies—and turning them into real, equitable healthcare outcomes for all Americans. Illinois and Chicago are at the nation's geographic center and the center of much of the country's scientific innovation and economic activity. Chicago's location at the core of America's heartland gives it easy access to the rest of the country. The city boasts one of the world's busiest and most productive airports: O'Hare is the Nation's number one port by value, with more than \$305 billion in trade in 2021, while more than 54 million passengers passed through in 2021. Combined, O'Hare and Midway originated more than 370,000 flights in 2021, exceeding the volume of flights from other top airports nationwide.

Federal Research Funding

On the research side, two of the most storied national labs—Fermilab and Argonne—are located in the Chicago region. The Chicago region has 12 R1 universities, with a talent pipeline of more than 500,000 students. In 2021, researchers in Chicago received \$1.1 billion in funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a 38 percent increase since 2017. Further, five universities in Illinois were among the top organizations to receive funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 2021, representing a total of \$278 million—ranking Illinois ninth in the U.S. for NSF funding. Chicagoland universities awarded more than 23,600 STEM degrees in 2020, the fifth highest in the nation. The

Chicago area has been named the top metropolitan area for corporate investment for nine years in a row because of its unmatched pipeline of diverse and skilled talent, central location, relative cost of doing business, and connectivity to the world.

Life Sciences Presence

In Chicagoland, there are more than 1,700 life sciences companies and nearly 88,000 jobs linked directly to life sciences. The city is home to 125 pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturers and more than 400 medical equipment and device manufacturers. Overall, Illinois is growing, with a projected gain of more than 250,000 residents in the last decade—reaching its highest population ever. Illinois has added one million square feet of lab space with up to four million square feet on the way, and Chicago had the most growth in venture capital funding for life science startups in the country between 2020 and 2021. The Illinois Medical District (located in Chicago) is home to more than 40 unique healthcare organizations, making it the second largest medical district in the country. Chicago also is home to the nation's third largest medical workforce with more than 460,000 employees.

Academic and Private Sector Investments

Both academia and the private sector have poured resources into the robust life sciences ecosystem of the Chicago area and there is an opportunity for the public sector to leverage this innovation. Within academia, the University of Chicago is investing \$633 million in a new 500,000 sq ft cancer center and expanded lab space. Northwestern University also has committed to significant lab expansions that will house new scientific innovations launched from the university and a \$100 million health care center on the south side focused on health equity. Additionally, in 2021, Chicago companies raised \$833 million in life sciences venture capital investment, making Chicago the top U.S. city for growth with a 556 percent increase in venture capital investments in 2020. For every one dollar of public funding for R&D in Illinois, companies here invest five dollars, pushing private sector investments in R&D in Illinois above states like New York and Texas.

Health Equity

We know health equity also is a priority for this administration and must be central to the work of ARPA-H. Here, too, Chicago is uniquely positioned. Health equity—and closing the stunning 30-year racial life-expectancy gap between Chicago's wealthiest and poorest neighborhoods—stands at the center of the City of Chicago's official health improvement plan, which more than 500 local institutions and partners helped create and endorse. We also have developed groundbreaking projects, like the Chicago ARC Innovation Center, a \$600 million healthcare innovation project in the Bronzeville neighborhood.

Many of the nation's best-known researchers in health equity are based in Chicago. Our health and hospital systems willingly have partnered across traditional silos to address this issue head-on. Multiple Chicago-based researchers are committed to improving diversity and representation in clinical trials and clinical research. Chicago sites regularly outperform other national sites when enrolling patients from historically under-represented demographics in clinical trials. This representation in clinical trials stems in part stems from the racial and ethnic diversity of Chicago's demographics, with Black and Latino populations comprising 58 percent of the City's residents.

Academic Medical Centers

Notably, Chicago also is home to a consortium of five major academic medical centers, serving as one of the major anchoring hubs to the NIH's All of Us research program. Two Chicago hospitals, Northwestern and Rush, were named in the US News & World Report "Top 20 Honor Roll." Leading institutions, combined with community health centers, make the Chicagoland area an ideal location to translate academic research into patient-focused benefits. ARPA-H also could pair innovation and equity with creative models, such as the Prysm Institute's "Equity for Equity" program, aimed at increasing the flow of private equity investment to startups owned and operated by people who are female, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, LGBTQ+, veterans, or who are disabled. Efforts like the Chicago HEAL Initiative are harnessing the employment and purchasing power of major hospitals to build a local pipeline of health care professionals and businesses that reflects the communities in Chicago's West and South Sides.

Cancer Care and Research

We know cancer research has been a high-priority focus area for this administration and will be a critical sector for ARPA-H. Chicago serves as a center for global oncology conferences and convenings. It has hosted the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) conference since 2010 and will continue to host this event until 2030. As one of the largest conferences nationally, it draws an average 40,000 attendees, including globally recognized oncology researchers and clinicians focused on the moonshot break-throughs to cure cancer. Additionally, Chicago will host the American Association for Cancer Research conference in 2025, another example of Chicago at the nexus of oncology innovation.

Economic Climate

Illinois, and the Chicago region in particular, also have the right economic climate for a large-scale research center. The cost of doing business is lower in Chicago than many other major cities, allowing more funding for research and attracting top tier talent. For example, at an average rate \$46/sq ft for lab space and \$42.25/sq ft for office space, rents are lower than in markets like Boston, San Diego, and the Bay Area. Chicago is a more affordable city in general given its size, ranking 21st among metro areas for most expensive areas for cost of living, and 41st for housing prices.


Conclusion

We believe that Chicago, and Illinois in general, offer ARPA-H the opportunity to become a powerful conduit to channel the vast momentum in the life sciences that is coursing throughout the Chicago region right now. With strong investments from government partners—such as the Rebuild Illinois Wet Lab Capital Program to expand lab access—and billions in private investment, ARPA-H would sit at the center of a growing ecosystem of investment and innovation if headquartered in the Chicagoland area.

As strong proponents of medical research who have spent much of our careers working to increase federal funding for new cures and treatments for patients worldwide, we look forward to partnering

with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Biden administration in shaping the future of ARPA-H. We can think of no better home for this innovative new initiative than the Chicago area. Further, we would respectfully request a meeting with leadership at HHS and ARPA-H within the next month to discuss these matters and how we might be able to work together to make this initiative a success. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

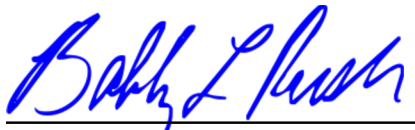
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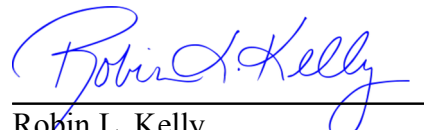
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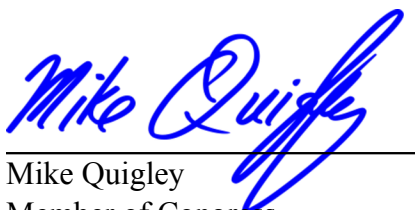
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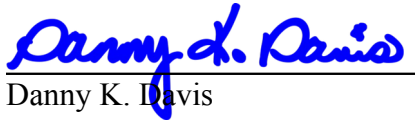
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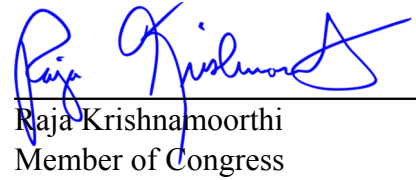
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