I salute you on the work that you are doing to advocate more funding for medical and clinical research.

During my 10-year tenure as chair of the appropriations subcommittee, I have worked coordinately with Senator Tom Harkin on a bipartisan basis to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health from $12 billion to almost $30 billion, and in the recent stimulus package, I was instrumental in adding another $10 billion for National Institutes of Health research. Scientific research must go forward, but clinical research also needs proper attention.

Many people have been instrumental in helping to create public awareness. For example, Michael J. Fox, who has Parkinson disease, has worked to call public attention to the ravages of Parkinson disease to illustrate our need for medical research. Fran Drescher, a television actress and activist, testified before my subcommittee a few years ago on issues related to cancer and on her own experience. When patients like Ms. Drescher and Mr. Fox personalize the need for research, the message impacts the public and decision makers. In addition, the work that the American Federation for Medical Research is doing can help those of us who are working in the US Congress to bring adequate money for medical research.

With all the scientific know-how we have, our situation is scandalous: that we have not accomplished more to cure these diseases. The increase in research in the last decade has produced some remarkable results to reduce the incidence of stroke, cancer, and heart disease. So, thank you for what you are doing.

Arlen Specter
Senator, U.S. Congress
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Senior Member, Appropriates Committee
Senior Member, Veterans Affair Committee