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Dear Senator/Representative:

As the 113th Congress continues to debate the issues surrounding deficit reduction, the American Society of Hematology (ASH) urges you to support a thoughtful, balanced approach that protects nondefense discretionary programs against any further cuts. The Society is particularly concerned about the impact of continued cuts on medical research supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the subsequent negative consequences for the health of all Americans. While ASH recognizes the deficit and the increasing debt the country faces will require difficult decisions, it is also important to understand that federal investment in research saves lives, reduces health costs, and strengthens the nation.

American biomedical research has led the world in probing the nature of human disease. Federal support of research on stem cells, blood clots, bleeding, and bone marrow transplants has allowed our Society's members to develop new medical treatments for patients with blood diseases, save innumerable lives, reduce human suffering, and spawn new industries. The field of hematology has made significant contributions to human health as a result of this support: children are routinely cured of leukemia; more than 90 percent of acute promyelocytic leukemia (APL) is cured with a drug derived from vitamin A; previously lethal chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) is effectively treated with well-tolerated pills; and multiple myeloma has yielded to new classes of drugs. Hematology advances have also helped patients with other types of cancers, heart disease, stroke, inherited metabolic disorders, and genetic diseases.

Yet, at a time when we should be investing more in research to save more lives, research funding is in serious jeopardy. There is no doubt that the impact of additional cuts on NIH-funded research will be immediate and devastating. The Senate Budget Committee estimates that sequestration would result in a 5.1 percent reduction in FY 2013 discretionary spending. However, the impact of sequestration would be exacerbated because it would occur in the middle of the fiscal year, would be on top of an estimated \$900 billion in spending cuts mandated by the Budget Control Act over the next ten years, and follow a decade of flat funding that has resulted in an NIH budget that has fallen nearly 20 percent after inflation. We are concerned about the number of scientists who have abandoned a research career; cuts of this magnitude will exacerbate this exodus, forcing researchers to abandon potentially life-enhancing research, negatively affecting job creation, and seriously jeopardizing America's leadership in medical research.

ASH urges you to recognize the value of biomedical research and NIH funding and to commit to a balanced approach to deficit reduction that does not include further cuts to discretionary programs such as biomedical research.

Sincerely,

Janis L. Abkowitz, MD
President