

July 10, 2015

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Investigations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Ranking Member DeGette:

The American Society of Nephrology (ASN), and the more than 15,000 nephrologists, scientists, and other healthcare professionals the society represents, are pleased to support the 21st Century Cures Act (H.R. 6).

ASN commends you for your leadership and vision in recognizing the critical importance of accelerating the discovery, development, and delivery of promising new treatments to patients. Increased funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and increased patient perspective in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) regulatory decision-making will advance these important goals for patients.

Kidney disease affects more than 20 million Americans. There are many unique causes of kidney disease, but when any type of kidney disease progresses to kidney failure, patients require either dialysis or transplantation to stay alive. Currently, 600,000 Americans have complete kidney failure, called end-stage renal disease (ESRD). Kidney disease disproportionately affects racial and ethnic minority populations, is associated with multiple co-morbidities including heart disease and diabetes, and is one of the most costly chronic conditions in the United States.

While America's scientific leadership has yielded important treatments for some patients, others still wait because the state of biomedical research and innovation in certain diseases is not as advanced; kidney disease is among the conditions for which we must accelerate the pace of innovation.

Although people with ESRD requiring dialysis comprise less than 1 percent of Medicare beneficiaries, they account for nearly 7 percent of Medicare's budget: the Medicare ESRD Program is unique in that it covers every American with kidney failure regardless of age or income. Yet despite these staggering costs, the fundamental principles of dialysis have not changed and patients with ESRD have seen only incremental improvements in their therapy in decades.

The 21st Century Cures Act is a significant opportunity to spur research and facilitate therapeutic development in kidney care and in other diseases where the state of biomedical research and therapies in certain diseases is not as advanced.

Again, ASN thanks you and the Energy and Commerce Committee for championing this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tod Ibrahim". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Tod Ibrahim
Executive Director