



March 29, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Becerra:

I write on behalf of NBCC advocates to urge that the Administration establish the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) as an agency independent from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We applaud the ambitious goals set out for ARPA-H but insist that it will take something wholly different from the public and private capabilities that we already have for basic research and healthcare to meet those goals.

For more than thirty years, NBCC has helped shape policy and successfully advocated for system changes that would further our mission to end breast cancer. NBCC's systems-oriented approach and national network of grassroots advocates allow it to play a qualitatively different role than other breast cancer advocacy organizations. NBCC provides a mission-driven voice to research, healthcare, and advocacy that has accelerated the goal of ending breast cancer. We are proud to work with you as a valuable partner in these efforts.

To succeed, NBCC believes that ARPA-H must foster innovation that pierces both technical and institutional barriers to create new capabilities and recognize breakthroughs. We support the concept of a reimagined medical research entity, ARPA-H, but it should be modeled as close as is possible to DARPA to be successful. Specifically, ARPA-H should:

- Be independent of the National Institutes of Health
- "Report" directly to a cabinet-level agency
- Have its own budget
- Consider leadership outside the world of biomedical research and focus on creating breakthrough capabilities
- Include lay advocates at all levels of leadership and decision-making.

This model is entirely different from the government's longstanding approach to disbursing grants for basic research, which successfully serves the vital goal of generating new knowledge. ARPA-H has the distinct purpose of applying knowledge to benefit lives. This requires that ARPA-H have the freedom to take bold approaches and tolerate failure to reap the benefits of new

discoveries. ARPA-H leadership can always reach into NIH for expertise if needed, but housing this entity within NIH would be a misuse of the funding appropriated and the mission intended.

NBCC supports efforts to establish and fund ARPA-H strategically. We appreciate your leadership in realizing the potential of ARPA-H. We look forward to working with you to make an independent ARPA-H a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fran". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "F" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Fran Visco  
President