

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 02, 2017

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION:

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

RE: Kidney Innovation Accelerator Program

Dear Secretary Azar:

History tells us that strong public-private partnerships, targeted to solve specific problems and capture the imagination, can lead to tremendous discoveries. The history of polio is one such partnership. Work by researchers, vaccine manufacturers, public health officials, the March of Dimes, and the Rotary Club have nearly eradicated an illness which once was one of the most frightening public health concerns. The Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the U.S. Department of Defense provided research contracts to civilian entities in the early 1960s. The resulting technology, ARPANET, became the foundation of the internet. More recently, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) used the same public-private approach to the problem of accessibility to common pharmaceutical products.¹ This particular technology offers solutions to problems such as drug shortages and high costs of prescription drugs.

That is why, with great interest, I recently read an article about the Kidney Innovation Accelerator Program announced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).² As you know, nearly all patients with kidney failure are Medicare beneficiaries, regardless of age. Annual Medicare expenditures for kidney disease is \$98 billion.³ But this does not capture the full cost of kidney disease. Over 2,000 Iowans are currently receiving dialysis, another 2,000 people are living with a kidney transplant, and nearly 600 are waiting for a kidney transplant. All of these Iowans go through their day hoping for a medical breakthrough to improve their lives.

I applaud the efforts of HHS to prioritize this initiative. I encourage you to continue to support this effort.

Sincerely,


Chuck Grassley
U.S. Senator

¹ Science 01Apr 2016 : 61-67 On-demand continuous-flow production of pharmaceuticals in a compact, reconfigurable system

² <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/healthcare/362652-trump-administration-proposes-kidney-innovation-accelerator>

³ https://www.usrds.org/2017/download/v2_c09_MedExp_17.pdf