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Colorado Delegation Members Contribute to 21st Century Cures Success [1]

January 24, 2017 by Natalie Barry [2]

At the end of 2016, Congress and President Obama took a significant step forward in reforming how this country researches and delivers new cures and therapies to patients in need. The bill, entitled the 21st Century Cures Act [3], was originally conceived by Congresswoman Diana DeGette along with House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (MI). The two worked for years to craft a bill that would improve research and care delivery – taking input from thousands of outside groups and advocates. Congresswoman DeGette worked closely with faculty members and leadership at CU Anschutz Medical Campus and CU Boulder to ensure that our ideas were considered in the process. We greatly appreciate all of her efforts to champion this bill. The final legislation will provide an additional $4.8 billion in new funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over the next ten years outside of the traditional appropriations process. Those NIH funds include $1.8 billion for cancer research and $1.56 billion for mapping the human brain through the NIH Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies [4] (BRAIN) Initiative. Additionally, the bill includes $1 billion to help states fight the opioid abuse epidemic over the next two years.

The final 21st Century Cures legislation includes a number of other important provisions meant to bring reform and innovation to research and clinical care delivery. These include efforts to harmonize regulations governing research in order to reduce the amount of “red tape” faced by researchers, reform the federal approach to mental healthcare, and a streamlining of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversight of drugs and medical devices. Other members of the Colorado congressional delegation collaborated with their own ideas – many of which were included in the final bill. Senator Michael Bennet worked with his Senate colleagues to add provisions improving electronic health records, developing a pathway for “breakthrough” medical devices at the FDA, incentivizing drugs to combat antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and adding patient focus into drug development. Congressman Mike Coffman worked hard to see provisions included in the bill that would provide incentives to get regenerative medicine therapies to market faster. Still other members – including Senator Cory Gardner, Congressman Scott Tipton, Congressman Doug Lamborn, Congressman Jared Polis, and Congressman Ed Perlmutter supported the legislation in its final form. The bill represents the best of what we hope for from our Congressional delegation – a bipartisan effort to improve the lives of patients in need and speed the pursuit of lifesaving knowledge.

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