

**STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION  
30 EAST 33<sup>RD</sup> STREET NEW YORK, NY 10016  
SUBMITTED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HHS, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES  
IN SUPPORT OF FY 2021 FUNDING FOR CDC, NIDDK, AND HRSA PROGRAMS  
SUBMITTED BY SHARON PEARCE  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

March 23, 2020

The National Kidney Foundation (NKF) is pleased to submit testimony regarding the significant burden that Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) places on our nation's health care system and to urge the subcommittee to increase federal funding for activities that support the Administration's July 2019 Advancing American Kidney Health (AAKH) initiative to improve kidney care and outcomes. NKF requests \$10 million for CDC to create a Kidney Disease Public Awareness Initiative; \$5 million to expand the CDC CKD Initiative; \$2.25 billion for the National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Diseases; \$10 million for the National Living Donor Assistance Center; and \$25 million to the KidneyX public-private partnership.

**About CKD**

CKD impacts 37 million American adults and is the nation's 9<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death. Kidney disease can be detected through simple blood and urine tests, yet 90% of CKD patients are undiagnosed, many until advanced stages when it is too late for interventions to slow disease progression. Nearly 750,000 Americans have irreversible kidney failure, also known as end-stage renal disease (ESRD), requiring either kidney dialysis at least 3 times per week or requiring a kidney transplant. African Americans develop ESRD at a rate of 3:1 compared to Whites and Hispanic Americans develop it at a rate of 1.3:1 compared to Whites. Medicare spends nearly

\$120 billion annually on the care of people with CKD, including \$71 billion for individuals with CKD who have not progressed to kidney failure.

CKD is a disease multiplier, with many patients also experiencing cardiovascular disease, bone disease and other chronic conditions. CKD also is an independent risk predictor for heart attack and stroke. Early stage intervention can improve outcomes and lower health care costs, yet only 6% of patients with high blood pressure and 40% with diabetes (which are responsible for two-thirds of all cases of ESRD) receive testing for CKD. To improve awareness, early identification, and early stage intervention, NKF calls on Congress to invest in kidney health programs throughout HHS.

### **Kidney Public Awareness Initiative**

A key aspect of the Advancing American Kidney Health (AAKH) Initiative is increased awareness of CKD among the public and health care practitioners to improve early detection, provide early intervention and improve outcomes. Early intervention can slow the progression of CKD and in some instances prevent kidney failure, reduce the impact of comorbidities and reduce hospitalizations and readmissions. Unfortunately, there is very little funding dedicated to increasing consumers' awareness of their risk for kidney disease. A sustained Kidney Public Awareness Initiative will educate at-risk individuals to enhance awareness of the causes and consequences of kidney disease and educate clinical professionals on the importance of early detection and opportunities for intervention. We urge the subcommittee to provide \$10 million for this important effort.

### **CDC Chronic Kidney Disease Initiative**

The CDC Chronic Kidney Disease Initiative is a comprehensive public health strategy to address CKD. Primarily, current activities in this program are devoted to a surveillance, epidemiology, and assistance to the National Center for Health Statistics for CKD data collection. To enhance the fight against CKD, the National Kidney Foundation requests \$5 million for the CKD program to establish and implement activities between national, state, and local public health networks and national partners to (1) develop strategies to identify and address gaps in CKD early detection and monitor progress; (2) support strategies to improve CKD early detection and treatment by primary care providers and; (3) facilitate the dissemination of information through state and local public health networks.

### **National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC)**

With 95,000 Americans on a wait list for a kidney transplant and fewer than 24,000 kidney transplants in 2019, removing barriers to living donation is widely viewed as a key opportunity to expand the number of transplants to improve patients' quality of life. The National Living Donor Assistance Program helps offset living donors' expenses that are not reimbursed by insurance or other programs, out of pocket expenses that often are a barrier to donation. For many people, living organ donation would not have been possible without this financial assistance. NKF requests the Committee restore its FY 2020 recommendation of \$10 million in the FY 2021 bill. Addressing financial barriers so that individuals are not burdened with out of pocket expenses related to their donation is the right thing to do for organ donors and kidney patients.

## **NIH NIDDK**

Despite the high prevalence of CKD and its impact on patients and on Medicare (the ESRD program represents 7 percent of Medicare spending but is only 1 percent of Medicare beneficiaries), NIH funding for kidney disease research is only about \$700 million annually. A key goal of the AAKH is providing new opportunities for research. America's scientists are at the cusp of many potential breakthroughs in improving our understanding of CKD, including genetic kidney disease. Further advances can lead to new therapies to delay and treat kidney diseases, which has the potential to provide cost savings to the government like that of no other chronic disease. We request \$2.25 billion for NIDDK.

## **KidneyX**

The National Kidney Foundation is an enthusiastic partner in the Kidney Innovation Accelerator (KidneyX), an HHS and American Society of Nephrology initiative to support and drive innovation in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of CKD. KidneyX consists of prize competitions to attract entrepreneurs, including those who are trying to develop an artificial kidney. KidneyX has attracted interest from a large and talented sphere of innovators. We urge the subcommittee to provide \$25 million in FY 20201 to enable this promising research and innovation to move forward.

Thank you for your past support and your consideration of the National Kidney Foundation's requests for Fiscal Year 2021.