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Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Representative DeGette:

On behalf of the American Heart Association (AHA), including the American Stroke Association (ASA) and over 22.5 million volunteers and supporters across the country, we congratulate you on advancing the 21st Century Cures Act (H.R. 6) with overwhelming bipartisan support in the Energy and Commerce Committee. We now stand with you in urging all Members of the U.S. House of Representatives to understand the urgent need to advance biomedical research while increasing access to new drug products and ask them to vote in support of H.R. 6 when it comes before the full House.

While we appreciate that such a complex piece of legislation like the 21st Century Cures Act may never be perfect, we believe it takes a number of important steps to fostering the discovery, development, and delivery of new cures for patients who need them most. We are particularly supportive of the creation of an innovation fund at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This \$10 billion would provide the NIH with a much needed boost in funding, especially as its budget has not kept pace with medical research inflation over the past decade. Robust NIH funded medical research remains our country's best hope to discover new ways to prevent, diagnose, treat, and ultimately develop cures for heart disease and stroke – our nation's No. 1 and No. 5 killers and leading causes of permanent disability.

The AHA is committed to working with Congress to advance this important legislation and is equally dedicated to ensuring that rigorous patient protections and efficacy safeguards remain in place during the drug and device review process to ensure that all new products are safe and effective before they are approved for use. Specifically, it is our hope that any final legislation would not inappropriately lower evidentiary standards required for drug and device approval, undermine efforts to ensure robust scientific data on the safety and efficacy of products for all populations that may use them, or remove critical patient safeguards currently part of the clinical trial process.

We thank you again for the tremendous commitment, time and attention you and your colleagues have dedicated to the needs of patients seeking new and improved treatment options and faster cures. The AHA encourages all Members of the House of Representatives to seize this significant opportunity and advance H.R. 6 so we can continue to work together to accelerate the identification and translation of new scientific discoveries into innovative treatments and cures for all patients.

Sincerely,

Elliott M. Antman, MD, FAHA
President
American Heart Association