Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We are writing to respectfully request that the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (L-HHS) subcommittee include robust funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to fund the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative. The inclusion of the BRAIN Initiative in the 21st Century Cures Act proves that this funding plays a critical role in our nation’s health, and therefore, it is imperative that we maintain strong ongoing support.

Brain disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, autism, epilepsy, schizophrenia, depression, addiction, and traumatic brain injury, are projected to be some of the most disabling and costly chronic diseases in the 21st century. One in three Americans will have a brain or nervous system disorder sometime in their life and the cost of treating neurological disorders is more than $500 billion each year. These statistics are grave, but they pale in comparison to the real-life impact that these diseases have on millions of Americans and their loved ones each day. Regrettably, we do not currently know enough about the brain to begin to meet this dire health and economic challenge. Fortunately, the BRAIN Initiative seeks to change that.

The complexity of the brain’s 100 billion cells and 100 trillion connections were once thought to be beyond the realm of human understanding. However, the BRAIN Initiative – a carefully designed project led by an inter-disciplinary team of some of the nation’s greatest scientists – has demonstrated how to achieve this unimaginable goal.

It is hoped that the technologies developed though the BRAIN Initiative will reveal the underlying pathology of brain disorders – both neurologic and psychiatric – and lead to a new era of discoveries of treatments, cures, and modes of prevention of these disorders that afflict up to 50 million of our fellow Americans.

Robust funding of the NIH, and subsequently the BRAIN Initiative, will enable the United States to remain a leader of biomedical research and to address the devastation wrought
by neurologic disorders. Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and we look forward to the subcommittee’s effort to successfully fund this critical Initiative.

Sincerely,

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate

M. MICHAEL ROUNDS
United States Senate

EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate

SHERROD BROWN
United States Senate

KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senate

CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senate

SUSAN COLLINS
United States Senate

SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senate

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senate

AMY KLOEBECHER
United States Senate