

OPPOSE HOUSE-PASSED “FIG LEAF” BILL, H.R. 2019

January 14, 2014

Dear Senator,

Our organizations strongly oppose H.R. 2019 sponsored by Representative Gregg Harper (R-MS) and passed by the House last month.

The bill purports to provide for a 10-year pediatric research initiative, but in reality the bill does not provide any actual increased funds to conduct pediatric research. At the same time, the bill repeals a portion of the presidential public financing system purportedly to pay for the pediatric research, as part of an effort to repeal the whole presidential public financing system.

H.R. 2019 is not a real effort to increase funding for pediatric research, but rather the fourth attempt by House Republican leaders, beginning in the last Congress, to repeal the presidential public financing system, with H.R. 2019 being a part of this effort.

We strongly urge you oppose H.R. 2019 in the Senate.

Our organizations include Americans for Campaign Reform, Brennan Center for Justice, the Campaign Legal Center, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, Common Cause, Democracy 21, Demos, the League of Women Voters, Public Citizen and U.S PIRG.

H.R. 2019 would repeal a portion of an anti-corruption campaign finance law which has served the nation well for most of its existence and has provided ordinary Americans with a critical role to play in financing presidential elections. The presidential public financing system needs to be repaired, not repealed.

Presidential candidates long recognized the value of this alternative system for financing their elections. Almost all candidates from both major parties voluntarily used the system to pay for their presidential campaigns from 1976 through 2004. Thereafter, the presidential financing system began to break down because no steps were taken by Congress to modernize the system.

The 2012 election made clear that the presidential public financing system is essential both to help prevent corruption and to provide candidates with an alternative way to finance their campaigns without having to rely on influence-seeking bundlers and donors. Legislation to restore an effective presidential public financing system has been introduced in this Congress by Representatives David Price and Chris Van Hollen.

In a Dear Colleague letter opposing H.R. 2019 sent to House members on December 11, 2013, Representatives Nita Lowey (D-NY), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ) showed that H.R. 2019 would not actually increase

spending for pediatric research.

Rep. Lowey is Ranking Member on the House Appropriations Committee, Rep. DeLauro is Ranking Member on the Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee Rep. Waxman is Ranking Member on the Energy and Commerce Committee and Rep. Pallone Jr. is Ranking Member on the Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Health.

According to the Dear Colleague letter:

The stated purpose of H.R. 2019 is to terminate the public contribution to the cost of quadrennial political party nominating conventions and redirect the savings into research on childhood diseases at the National Institute of Health (NIH). While, we strongly support efforts to increase funding for pediatric research and other research at NIH, we caution our colleagues that H.R. 2019 would do nothing to advance that goal.

H.R. 2019 does not appropriate the savings from the public funding repeal for additional research funds at the NIH. According to the Dear Colleague letter:

The legislation would indeed end public support for the expenses of the party conventions. It purports to make the resulting savings available to NIH, a mere \$12.6 million per year, or about four-tenths of one percent of the roughly \$3.6 billion that NIH reported spending on pediatric research last year. However, in reality this bill does not provide any additional funds to NIH. Rather, it specifies that the funds shall be available for NIH pediatric research “only to the extent and in such amounts as provided in advance in appropriations Acts.”

According to the Dear Colleague letter:

The appropriations needed to make these “Kids First” funds available for pediatric research would be ordinary discretionary appropriations, just like any others for NIH. They would be fully subject to the Budget Control Act caps – as reduced by sequestration – and to the budget resolution spending allocations to the Appropriations Committee and Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee. It is those caps and allocations, combined with sequestration, that have been driving down funding for NIH research and many other important national needs.

The bill does nothing to change those policies and nothing to increase the amount that the Appropriations Committee has available to support biomedical research.

The Dear Colleague letter stated:

Sequestration reduced the NIH budget by \$1.55 billion – a cut more than 100 times larger than the pretended increase in the Kids First bill. Within NIH, sequestration cut the cancer institute by \$255 million and the child health institute by \$66 million.

The presidential public financing system is necessary to protect citizens against government corruption and to provide presidential candidates with an alternative, citizen-based means to

finance their campaigns. The system should be repaired for future presidential campaigns.

We strongly urge you oppose H.R. 2019 in the Senate.

Americans for Campaign Reform

Brennan Center for Justice

Campaign Legal Center

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington

Common Cause

Democracy 21

Demos

League of Women Voters

Public Citizen

U.S PIRG