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April 27, 2015

The Honorable Jim Cooper  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cooper:

On behalf of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, we are pleased to support the Research for All Act.

The AHA/ASA has long recognized the need to increase diversity in research. Without such diversity, many questions about how and why cardiovascular disease (CVD) manifests differently in women and men remain unanswered. We support efforts to improve the representation of women and other under-represented groups in clinical trials so that potential differences in how treatments work can be discovered before these products are widely used in patients.

The cardiovascular field contains numerous examples of drugs and medical devices working differently in women or other subgroups. To give just a few examples, the drug digoxin used to treat patients with heart failure is associated with an increased risk of death among women but not men, and a next-generation ventricular assist device, used in heart failure patients, was associated with a higher rate of stroke in women versus men.

Your legislation will help to further our understanding of the sex differences that exist in the area of CVD. The National Institutes of Health's (NIH) development of guidelines on the inclusion of female cells, tissues, and animals in basic research and gender reporting in pre-clinical studies will ultimately lead to a better understanding of the biological reasons why CVD manifests differently in women and men. In addition, by directing the NIH to update its guidelines to better enforce the current law on inclusion of women in clinical research, authorizing funding for NIH's Special Centers of Research on Sex Differences, and directing the Government Accountability Office to update its reports on the inclusion of women in clinical trials, we can help ensure that women are being adequately and appropriately included in medical research.

Greater diversity in research is important for all Americans so that we can one day fulfill the promise of personalized medicine. Thank you again for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Elliott M. Antman, MD, FAHA  
President