American Cancer Society and ACS CAN Statement on Retirement of National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins

Dr. Karen E. Knudsen, CEO of the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) issued the following statement in response to the announced retirement of the National Institutes of Health Director, Dr. Francis Collins:

“For more than a decade Dr. Collins has provided exemplary leadership and stewardship as head of the NIH, the nation’s top medical research engine and the driving force behind numerous recent breakthroughs in cancer treatment and prevention through the National Cancer Institute.

“During his tenure as director Dr. Collins has overseen an increase in NIH funding from $29.5 billion to $43 billion and has successfully shepherded the creation and implementation of numerous significant research initiatives. Among the most significant to cancer is the Cancer Moonshot, which has already funded more than 240 research projects and helped speed the development of improved and new uses for immunotherapies, boosted research efforts into childhood cancer, and worked to expand the use of early cancer detection strategies.

“Additionally, Dr. Collins’ leadership helped ensure years of NIH research into coronaviruses was quickly put to work developing safe and effective COVD-19 vaccines in partnership with industry. The critical science that led to an accelerated pathway to these vaccines is an essential component to curbing the pandemic and ensuring everyone, including cancer patients, can safely access necessary medical care and build a healthy future.

“Before his tenure as NIH director, Dr. Collins worked for decades as a researcher, contributing to critical science, most notably for his leadership on the Human Genome project, that is the direct result of the federal government's essential year over year investment in medical discovery.

“We extend our gratitude to Dr. Collins for dedicating his career to the advancement of medical science in public service and look forward to working with the next director to continue the advancement of medical research, cancer breakthroughs, and the lifesaving work of the NIH.”