Contact: Charlene Mancusi
The Charles H. Hood Foundation
Telephone 617.279.2230
Charlene.Mancusi@CharlesHoodFoundation.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# The Charles H. Hood Foundation Announces Bridge Funding to Allow Pediatric Research Projects to Continue

December 5, 2018 – Boston – The Charles H. Hood Foundation, a family Foundation focused on enhancing the lives of children through pediatric research and innovation, recently announced bridge funding for three pediatric research projects in New England. The funding resulted from an opportunity brought to the attention of the Foundation following unanticipated funding reductions to several grant projects that were in progress across the country. The Foundation reached out to the original funder to discuss how the Foundation might partner with them to help close the gap on the funding shortfalls. An initial group of research projects were identified in the New England area and the Hood Foundation collaborated with the impacted institutions seeking ways to leverage available resources to allow the projects to continue to move forward. The project recipients ultimately selected by the Hood Foundation to receive bridge funding assistance were: Dr. Suneet Agarwal from Harvard Medical School, Boston Children's Hospital; Dr. Laura Anne Lowery from Boston College; and Dr. Bob Varelas from Boston University.

"One of the most problematic issues in conducting scientific research is the prospect of losing your funding mid-stream," said Hood Foundation Trustee Jeffrey Boutwell. "When the Charles H. Hood Foundation learned that this indeed might happen to several important pediatric research projects in our area, we wanted to help, given our 75-year history of promoting children's health in New England. The Hood Foundation is delighted to have been able to provide one-time funding, which also leveraged additional support, to three important projects that will advance children's health both in and beyond New England."

While this need fell outside the Hood Foundation's core funding initiatives, the opportunity to provide the gap funding along with the researchers' sponsor institutions desire to help keep these projects on track was compelling. In addition to the rigorous application process that had been required by the original funder for initial grant approval, the Hood Foundation further ensured that each project met the eligibility requirements and fit within the Foundation's mission. With each of the selected projects partially funded by the Hood Foundation, this collaborative effort to leverage funding enabled the

researchers to meaningfully complete the research or allowed the projects to reach a position to seek additional funding.

“I am deeply grateful to the Charles Hood Foundation for this bridge funding. The Hood award is filling a critical need at an important time in our project,” said Dr. Suneet Agarwal, a funding recipient with Harvard Medical School. “We expect that these studies will lay the groundwork for developing drugs to treat dyskeratosis congenita and other deadly disorders.”

The projects funded include:

**Suneet Agarwal, MD, PhD**
***Harvard Medical School, Children's Hospital Boston***

- **Title:** Dysregulation of the Telomerase RNA Component in Congenital Diseases
- **Project Description:** Children born with genetic mutations that disrupt the function of an enzyme inside the cells called telomerase, affects the human body’s ability to develop, grow and repair itself. The mutation results in a deadly syndrome called dyskeratosis congenita (DC). Children with DC suffer from problems in many parts of the body, most notably failure of the blood system. The goal of this project is to lay the foundation for developing drugs to treat dyskeratosis congenita.

**Laura Anne Lowery, PhD**
***Boston College***

- **Title:** Role of TACC3 in Cranial Neural Crest Cell Migration: Implications for Craniofacial Disorders
- **Project Description:** Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome (WHS) is a complex genetic disorder resulting from a chromosomal deletion that leads to severe developmental delays, distinctive craniofacial defects, and a variety of other birth defects, including mental retardation, heart and muscle defects, and seizures. This research has the potential to make significant new insights into the cellular mechanism by which Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome occurs during embryonic development and will provide knowledge that may inform development of better treatments in the future.

**Xaralabos (Bob) Varelas, PhD**
***Boston University***

- **Title:** Understanding the Molecular Mechanisms Controlling Multi-Cilia Development
- **Project Description:** Defects in the formation of cilia found on the surface of cells throughout the human body, or function of these structures, can cause numerous pathologies, designated ciliopathies. Children born with ciliopathies frequently experience respiratory distress and are susceptible to lung infection due to impairment of cilia on the surface of cells that line the airways. The goal of this project is to guide future therapeutic development that ultimately can be used for effective treatment of cilia-related disorders.

**About The Charles H. Hood Foundation**

Since 1942, the Hood Foundation has carried on the legacy of founder Charles H. Hood by funding groundbreaking and innovative pediatric research in and around the New England area. The Foundation makes meaningful pediatric medical advancements possible by providing funding in the key stages of development, enabling high-impact projects to both begin and succeed earlier. Supporting brilliant minds early in their careers helps position promising researchers to secure long-term funding from other private and government sources, thereby building the talent pool of innovative medical researchers that will continue to impact the health and well-being of children and their families in New England and around the world. Visit www.charleshoodfoundation.org for more information.

# # #