

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2004

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
1016 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

We thank you for your desire to eliminate the many chronic diseases that afflict our population. You have often demonstrated your commitment to both the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in pursuit of this goal.

We are writing on behalf of the 18 million Americans who suffer from diabetes, as well as the millions more who are at high risk of developing diabetes. We believe strongly that we need to continue research to fight for a cure for this devastating disease as well as to find better methods of treatment and management.

As you are certainly aware, diabetes is a very serious chronic disease and a major public health issue. It is the nation's fourth leading cause of death by disease, it is a leading cause of heart disease, stroke, amputations, blindness and kidney disease, and it is a serious and prevalent chronic illness among children. Alarming, millions of Americans do not even know they have this life threatening disease. Furthermore, the prevalence of diabetes is increasing at an epidemic rate: from 1990 to 2001, diabetes increased by 61% across the country. And from 2000 to 2001 alone, it increased by 8%.

The Division of Diabetes Translation at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the primary program that the federal government uses to focus on the prevention and management of diabetes. Indeed, the Division literally translates medical research—such as that conducted at NIH—into practices and programs that can be used in the field to help people currently suffering from diabetes.

We are extremely concerned that a significant portion of the American population is unnecessarily suffering due to undiagnosed and uncontrolled diabetes. Currently only 24 states are funded at the highest level of \$800,000 for their diabetes prevention and control programs. The other 26 states receive a mere \$250,000 every year to combat this rising epidemic. It is critical that we take immediate action to support these essential state programs. One significant step towards this goal would be to double the funding for CDC's Division of Diabetes Translation over the next 5 years. For FY2005, that would require only a \$10 million increase. We ask for your help and support in this important goal.

Increasing access to treatment is not enough; we must continue to support research. Together, your subcommittee and the Congressional Diabetes Caucus have worked to increase funding for diabetes research and programs at NIH. In 1999, the Diabetes Research Working Group (DRWG) also reached this conclusion, finding that federal spending has not kept pace with the growing impact of diabetes on the country. Since 1980, the proportion of the NIH budget devoted to diabetes research has decreased even though the death rate due to diabetes has increased by 40% over the same period. Given the severe economic and public health impacts of diabetes, we ask you to fund the NIH at the highest possible level.

Scientists are making progress toward controlling and curing diabetes. However, this movement needs to be sustained by increasing NIH funding and doubling the DDT budget to support state Diabetes Control Program funding.

Sincerely,



DIANA DEGETTE
Member of Congress



GEORGE NETHERCUTT
Member of Congress

Xavier Becerra
KAVIER BECERRA
Member of Congress

Virgil Goode

Melissa A. Hurt

John Sprain

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