

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 2, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related
Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related
Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

As you work to negotiate a final agreement for Fiscal Year 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations, we urge you to prioritize the final inclusion of the House-passed language encouraging the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) to increase and report on multi-Institute eating disorders research as passed in H.R. 7617 (H. Rept. 116-450), over the draft Senate report language which is limited to continuing and reporting on multi-Institute research.

Eating disorders are one of the most serious mental illnesses, affecting 30 million Americans during their lifetime. Before the COVID-19 public health emergency, eating disorders led to 10,200 deaths a year, or 1 death every 52 minutes, and those affected have higher rates of suicide (23 percent) in comparison to the general population.¹ According to recent research, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated eating disorder behaviors, creating an urgent need for support.²

Despite the number of Americans affected and lives lost, NIH has historically underfunded eating disorders research, only spending approximately 0.11 percent of its budget on eating disorders research, for a disease that affects 9 percent of the U.S. population during their lifetimes and costs the U.S. economy \$64.7 billion dollars a year.³ The COVID-19 pandemic has made individuals with eating disorders more in need of evidence-based prevention and treatment to support these Americans than ever before. The following House-passed language will help to increase that research and enable coordination amongst NIH's institutes, centers, and offices:

¹ Deloitte Access Economics. (2020, June). The Social and Economic Cost of Eating Disorders in the United States of America: A Report for the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders and the Academy for Eating Disorders. Retrieved from <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/report-economic-costs-of-eating-disorders/>

² Termorshuizen, J., Watson, H., Thornton, L., Borg, S., Flatt, R., & MacDermot, C. et al. (2020). Early impact of COVID-19 on individuals with self-reported eating disorders: A survey of ~1,000 individuals in the United States and the Netherlands. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*. doi: 10.1002/eat.23353

³ FY 2018 Budget in Brief - NIH. (2017, May 23). Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/about/budget/fy2018/budget-in-brief/nih/index.html>

⁴ Owens, P. L., Ph.D., Fingar, K. R., Ph.D., M.P.H., McDermott, K. W., Ph.D., Muhuri, P. K., Ph.D., & Heslin, K. C., Ph.D. (March 2019). Inpatient Stays Involving Mental and Substance Use Disorders, 2016. *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*. Retrieved from <https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb249-Mental-Substance-Use-Disorder-Hospital-Stays-2016.pdf>

“Eating Disorder Research.—The Committee commends NIH for supporting multi-Institute research on the chronic, fatal, and serious mental illnesses encompassing eating disorders that affect 30 million Americans during their lifetimes, and its association with other conditions such as diabetes, infertility, heart disease, PTSD, substance use, co-morbid mental illnesses, and tooth decay. The Committee recognizes that eating disorders are a deadly bio-psycho-social illness and that multiple research topics must be explored to understand, prevent, and treat eating disorders, including psychosocial issues; health disparities and food insecurity; environmental factors such as weight stigma; the complex interplay of metabolic processes; and maternal health. The Committee encourages NIH to increase support for eating disorders research and explore these and other research questions through multiple Institutes and Centers, including NIMH, NIDDK, NIMHD, and NIDA. The Committee directs NIH to inform the Committee on the steps taken to increase support for eating disorders and measures taken to improve prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of eating disorders in the fiscal year 2022 Congressional Justification.”

We urge you to prioritize the House-passed language within the final LHHS negotiations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ted Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Brian Fitzpatrick
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Kendra Horn
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Alcee L. Hastings
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Barbara Lee
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