March 19, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
House Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the estimated 8.3 million Americans who have psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, we write to request that you include $1 million in funding, as well as corresponding report language, in the Fiscal Year 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act to advance public health initiatives to improve the lives of people who are impacted by them.

Psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are painful and disfiguring chronic autoimmune diseases. Psoriasis is the most prevalent autoimmune disease in the United States and affects approximately 3 percent of the adult population. Up to 30 percent of people with psoriasis may also develop psoriatic arthritis, an inflammatory form of arthritis that can cause irreversible joint damage if left untreated. Beyond the physical pain and discomfort of these diseases, individuals with psoriatic disease are at a heightened risk of developing a number of comorbid conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, and stroke as well as depression and anxiety. A study on psoriasis published in 2015 found that the disease may cost the nation as much as $135 billion per year in direct and indirect costs.

As you are aware, in FY 2010, $1.5 million was appropriated in order to develop a public health agenda on psoriatic disease. This funding allowed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop a comprehensive blueprint for public health research on psoriatic disease based on current knowledge and gaps. Unfortunately, this funding lasted only through FY 2013 and the agency has not been able to pursue the priorities identified in the public health agenda.

The requested FY 2019 funding will build upon the foundation of the public health agenda to address a key gap and in so doing help improve the quality of life for people with psoriatic disease. Specifically, the $1 million being requested would support research on the connection between psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis and other chronic conditions. This enhanced knowledge could lead to targeted public health interventions to help persons with the disease better manage their care and would help further inform the overall research agenda in this space. To help guide the use of these funds, we request that you include the following report language under the Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion subheading within the CDC section of the report.
Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis—The Committee recognizes the growing body of evidence linking psoriatic disease, which impacts more than eight million Americans, to other comorbidities such as cardiovascular disease, mental health and substance abuse challenges, kidney disease, and other conditions. The Committee commends the CDC for identifying opportunities for expanded research on psoriatic disease in its Public Health Agenda for Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis and directs CDC to increase funding for intramural and grant-based research on the comorbidities of psoriatic disease, including research that can be done in collaboration with or funded by other disease programs such as Arthritis, Cardiovascular Health, or Mental Illness.

We thank you for giving your complete consideration to this request. If you have additional questions, please contact Kaitlyn Lane in Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz’s office at kaitlyn.lane@mail.house.gov or Elle Ciapciak in Rep. Ryan Costello’s office at elle.ciapciak@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

Ryan Costello  
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
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Steve Cohen  
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John Katko  
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
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