April 12, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, we write to request that you include $1 million in funding and corresponding report language to support individuals with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. An estimated 8.3 million Americans are impacted by psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis and making this investment in research will help patients live fuller and more productive lives.

Psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are painful and disfiguring chronic autoimmune diseases. Psoriasis affects approximately three percent of the adult population making it the most prevalent autoimmune disease in the United States. 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.

In 2010, Congress appropriated $1.5 million for the development of a public health agenda. 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 expired in 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. The $1 million we request 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 also 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.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and your support of patients with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.

Sincerely,

ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator

CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senator

CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senator

DEBBIE STABENOW
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