Support Robust Federal Investment in Food Allergy Research for FY20

Dear Colleague,

The most recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open* found that nearly **32 million Americans suffer from food allergies**. That is one in ten adults, and one in 13 children – or roughly two in every classroom. This means 32 million people (more than the population of the entire state of Texas) are afflicted with a condition that, if serious enough, can cause death within 15 minutes of allergen exposure.

The rate of suffering from food allergies has continued to increase: In the past twenty years alone, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported a 50 percent increase in prevalence of food allergies in children, with a tripling in reported numbers of children sensitive to peanuts and tree nuts.

This problem will only continue to accelerate unless we make robust investments necessary to understand, treat, and ultimately cure food allergies and related conditions. Our country's public research institutions within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Department of Defense (DoD) are uniquely positioned to make the advances needed that will help tens of millions of Americans.

In 2005, NIH established the Consortium on Food Allergy Research (CoFAR) within the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at NIH. CoFAR has identified genes associated with an increased risk for peanut allergy and has also identified the most promising routes, doses and durations of egg and peanut immunotherapy for further study, such as the demonstrated success of the four-year egg oral immunotherapy (eOIT) treatment, which allowed certain participants to safely reintroduce egg into their diet after years of abstention.

In DoD in FY09, the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) established the Genetic Studies of Food Allergy Research Program (GSFARP) with a $2.5 million appropriation "*to provide support for scientifically meritorious genetic research focused on food allergies*." In FY10, the appropriation was $1.875 million. Food Allergies were also included in the Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program's (PRMRP) general list of conditions eligible to be studied in FY12 and FY16.

I ask you to join me in cosigning three letters to the relevant Appropriations subcommittees, so that we can make clear the desire from Congress to take on the important and widespread issue of food allergies. Two letters to the subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education: one requests the addition of language into the subcommittee's report praising NIH's work and encouraging further robust investment while the other letter requests an increase in CoFAR's budget from $6.1 million to $12.2 million, annually. The letter to the Defense subcommittee requests the addition of "food allergies" to the list of conditions eligible to be studied under the PRMRP within the CDMRP.

Click here to view the bipartisan letter to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education requesting food allergy *report language* – co-led by Rep. Patrick McHenry.

Click here to view the bipartisan letter to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education requesting an increase in *funding* to the Consortium on Food Allergy Research within NIH – co-led by Rep. Anthony Gonzalez.

Click here to view the bipartisan letter to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense the addition of food allergies to the PRMRP within DoD – co-led by Rep. David P. Roe, M.D.

To sign on to all three letters click here.

OR, to sign on to only one or two letters, use the below links.

To sign on to the letter with Rep. McHenry to the LHHS Subcommittee requesting food allergy report language click here.

To sign on to the letter with Rep. Gonzalez (R-OH) to the LHHS Subcommittee requesting an increase in funding for the Consortium on Food Allergy Research within NIH click here.

To sign on to the letter with Rep. Roe, M.D. to the Defense Subcommittee requesting the addition of food allergies to the PRMRP click here.

Please contact Will McKelvey in my office at will.mckelvey@mail.house.gov or 5-2631 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Ro Khanna

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill, we respectfully request the addition of report language reflecting the importance of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) engaging in trans-NIH research on food allergies.

A study recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open* found a far higher prevalence of food allergies among American adults than previously revealed: about 10.8 percent – or 26 million adults in the U.S. – reported having a convincing food allergy. According to Food Allergy and Research Education (FARE), another 5.9 million children under the age of 18 also suffer from food allergies. That is one in 13 children or roughly two in every classroom. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) reports the prevalence of food allergies in children increased by 50 percent between 1997 and 2011. Between 1997 and 2008, the prevalence of peanut or tree nut allergy appears to have more than tripled in U.S. children. There is no U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved treatment for food allergies yet available.

Left untreated, allergic reactions to food can have deadly consequences. About 40 percent of children with food allergies have experienced a severe reaction, such as anaphylaxis. Each year, more than 200,000 Americans require emergency medical care for allergic reactions to food. That is equivalent to one trip to the emergency room every three minutes.

In 2005, NIH established the Consortium on Food Allergy Research (CoFAR) within the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). CoFAR has identified genes associated with an increased risk for peanut allergy and has also identified the most promising routes, doses and durations of egg and peanut immunotherapy for further study, among many other accomplishments. In 2017, NIH announced its intention to award CoFAR $42.7 million over seven years so that it may continue evaluating new approaches to treat food allergy.

Continued investment in food allergy research through CoFAR and NIAID has the potential to make serious strides towards understanding the causes of, and developing treatments for, this widespread and under-researched condition. The sharp increase in prevalence over the past two decades indicates a trend that merits further investigation.

We respectfully request that the Subcommittee commends the National Institute of Health (NIH) for its ongoing investment in clinical research on food allergies. The NIH is encouraged to continue to provide robust investment to support studies, such as CoFAR's four-year egg oral immunotherapy (eOIT) treatment, which allowed certain participants to safely reintroduce egg into their diet after years of abstention. As one of the most common food allergies which often appears in early childhood, egg allergy carries the risk of severe reaction and can negatively affect the quality of life for children and

adults with the allergy. Breakthroughs like the eOIT treatment, scaled across other major food allergies, can significantly improve the quality of life for tens of millions of Americans.

We therefore ask the following statement of programmatic request be appended as Report Language to the FY20 bill appropriating funding for NIH:

> ***Food Allergies.—****The Committee recognizes the serious issue of food allergies which affect approximately eight percent of children and ten percent of adults in the United States. The Committee commends the ongoing work of NIAID in supporting a total of 17 clinical sites for this critical research, including seven sites as part of the Consortium of Food Allergy Research (CoFAR). The Committee urges NIH to support robust investment to expand its clinical research network to add new centers of excellence in food allergy clinical care and to select such centers from those with a proven expertise in food allergy research.*

We thank you for your attention to our concerns, and we look forward to working with you to invest in research that will lead to effective treatments and ultimately, a cure, for life-altering food allergies.

Sincerely,

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Patrick McHenry
Member of Congress

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

We write to thank you for your leadership in championing investment in food allergy research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). As you consider the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill, we respectfully request you support a support robust funding for the Consortium of Food Allergy Research within the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Disease at the level of $85.4 million over the next seven years – an annual increase of $6.1 million in order to reflect the increasing rate of food allergies in Americans.

A study recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open* found a far higher prevalence of food allergies among American adults than previously revealed: about 10.8 percent – or 26 million – reported having a convincing food allergy. According to Food Allergy and Research Education (FARE), another 5.9 million children under the age of 18 also suffer from food allergies. That is one in 13 children or roughly two in every classroom. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) reports the prevalence of food allergies in children increased by 50 percent between 1997 and 2011. Between 1997 and 2008, the prevalence of peanut or tree nut allergy appears to have more than tripled in children in the U.S. There is no U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved treatment for food allergy yet available.

Left untreated, allergic reactions to food can have deadly consequences. About 40 percent of children with food allergies have experienced a severe reaction, such as anaphylaxis. Each year, more than 200,000 Americans require emergency medical care for allergic reactions to food. That is one trip to the emergency room every three minutes.

In 2005, NIH established the Consortium on Food Allergy Research (CoFAR) within the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). CoFAR has identified genes associated with an increased risk for peanut allergy and has also identified the most promising routes, doses and durations of egg and peanut immunotherapy for further study, among many other accomplishments. In 2017, NIH announced an intention to award CoFAR $42.7 million over seven years so that it may continue evaluating new approaches to treat food allergy.

Continued investment in food allergy research through CoFAR and NIAID has the potential to make serious strides towards understanding the causes of, and developing treatments for, this widespread and under-researched condition. The sharp increase in prevalence over the past two decades is a disturbing trend that needs further investigation and the requisite resources properly address what is at risk of becoming a public health crisis.

We therefore respectfully request an increase of CoFAR's budget to $85.4 million over the next seven years. At $12.2 million annually, this modest investment will fund groundbreaking research that gets us closer to fully understanding, treating, and ultimately curing food allergies. Already, CoFAR has

made important advances, such as the demonstrated success of the four-year egg oral immunotherapy (eOIT) treatment, which allowed certain participants to safely reintroduce egg into their diet after years of abstention. As one of the most common food allergies which often appears in early childhood, egg allergy carries the risk of severe reaction and can negatively affect the quality of life for children and adults with the allergy. Breakthroughs like the eOIT treatment, scaled across other major food allergies, can significantly improve the quality of life for tens of millions of Americans.

We thank you for your attention to our concerns, and we look forward to working with you to invest in research that will lead to effective treatments and ultimately, a cure, for life-altering food allergies.

Sincerely,

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Anthony Gonzalez
Member of Congress

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) Department of Defense (DoD) Appropriations bill, we respectfully request food allergies be added to the list of conditions to be eligible for research under the Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP). The PRMRP is a valuable program within DoD, offering creative, long-term insights into significant medical issues like food allergies that affect members of the armed services and their families and do not always receive the investments they require in the private sector.

A study recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open* found a far higher prevalence of food allergies among American adults than previously revealed: about 10.8 percent – or 26 million adults – reported having a convincing food allergy. According to Food Allergy and Research Education (FARE), another 5.9 million children under the age of 18 suffer from at least one food allergy. That is one in 13 children or roughly two in every classroom. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports the prevalence of food allergies in children increased by 50 percent between 1997 and 2011. Between 1997 and 2008, the prevalence of peanut or tree nut allergy appears to have more than tripled in U.S. children.

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TRICARE faces the rising cost of care and support for military families dealing with food allergies. According to DoD, TRICARE provides coverage to almost 9.4 million beneficiaries around the world, almost four million of which are family of service members. Applying the rate of food allergy prevalence in the general population to family members, alone, estimates over 400,000 beneficiaries afflicted with food allergies.

Further, a diagnosis of food allergy adversely affects one's ability to join or remain in the military. Although individuals with food allergies may apply for military service, each service branch has its own regulations to assess the applicant's food allergy history. The Army has recently reported struggles with recruitment, with more than two-thirds of young adults not qualifying for military service due to poor physical fitness or other issues. Readiness is vital to our national security, so it is crucial we support research on treating and curing this condition so as to minimize the proportion of the public that may be discouraged or disqualified from service due to food allergies.

DoD study of food allergies is not a new idea. In FY09, the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) established the Genetic Studies of Food Allergy Research Program (GSFARP) with a $2.5 million appropriation "to provide support for scientifically meritorious genetic research focused on

food allergies." In FY10, the appropriation was $1.875 million. Specific line item funding ended In FY11, but for FY12 and FY16, food allergies were eligible for research under the PRMRP.

Renewed investment in food allergy research through the PRMRP has the potential to make serious strides towards understanding the causes of, and developing treatments for, this widespread and under-researched condition. The sharp increase in prevalence over the past two decades is a disturbing trend that needs further investigation.

We respectfully ask your support for re-establishing food allergies as eligible for research funding through the PRMRP. Food allergy research has the potential to benefit military service members and their families and to vastly improve the state of food allergy research in this country for all who are, or who will be, diagnosed with this condition.

Sincerely,

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

David P. Roe, M.D.
Member of Congress