The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan and Democratic Leader Pelosi:

We are writing to thank you for your strong and continuous support of the Special Diabetes Program (SDP) and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) and ask that you continue to ensure that investments are made in these vital programs. Together, these two programs are improving the lives of individuals living with diabetes and helping the families across our country that are impacted by this disease.

Nearly 30 million Americans have diabetes and an additional 86 million have prediabetes. It is critical that we continue to invest in the research necessary to develop a cure for diabetes and support the programs that help prevent and manage the symptoms of this disease.

Diabetes is one of our country’s most costly diseases in both human and economic terms. This disease does not pick and choose who it impacts; rather, it affects people of all ages, races, and regions of our country. Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney disease, blindness in working-age adults, and non-traumatic amputations. In addition, it is a leading cause of heart disease and stroke. More than one-in-five health care dollars and one-in-three Medicare dollars are spent on treating people with diabetes. In total, it is estimated that $322 billion is spent every year on treating diabetes and prediabetes in the United States.

These costs are expected to increase as the number of people with diabetes continues to grow. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the incidence of type 1 diabetes increased by 21 percent among Americans under the age of 20 between 2001 and 2009. Additionally, over the next 25 years, the number of Americans living with diabetes is expected to double and related health costs are predicted to triple.

While the increase in these statistics is very concerning, the Special Diabetes Program is making meaningful progress. The SDP funds research that is leading directly to the development of new insights and therapies that are improving the lives of those with diabetes, and accelerating progress towards curing and preventing the disease. Likewise, the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) is having a significant and positive impact on the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN), which are disproportionately affected by type 2 diabetes. For example, the SDPI is making it possible to develop and sustain quality diabetes treatment and prevention programs in AI/AN communities.
Some notable developments from the SDP/SDPI include:

- **Artificial Pancreas (AP) Systems**: SDP-funded research has accelerated the development of AP systems, which will reduce costly and burdensome type 1 diabetes complications and improve quality of life for those with the disease. Today, SDP funds are being used to test multiple versions of AP systems in outpatient clinical trials; the use of AP systems in adults could save Medicare roughly $1 billion over 25 years.

- **Kidney Disease**: Researchers have discovered that 6.5 years of intensive blood glucose control can cut in half the onset of impaired kidney function in people with type 1 diabetes. This type of reduction in end-stage renal disease (ESRD) could save Medicare roughly $126 billion over 25 years. Also, between 2000 and 2013, incidence rates of ESRD in AI/AN individuals with diabetes declined by 48 percent. The decline in ESRD incidence has resulted in a 29% decline in prevalence of ESRD since 2000, representing the only instance of a decline in adjusted prevalence for a major racial group.

- **Eye Therapies**: SDP-funded research discovered that combining a drug with laser therapy can reverse vision loss in people living with diabetes. The SDP also filled a critical research gap by funding a head-to-head comparison of three drugs for the treatment of diabetic eye disease. The results help patients, clinicians, and insurers to identify the right therapy and course of treatment for each individual person.

- **Prevention**: A 15-year study of 8,600 children is currently underway to determine what environmental factors influence the onset of type 1 diabetes. Researchers believe that, by identifying specific triggering factors, new strategies can be developed to prevent the initial onset of type 1 diabetes.

- **Glucose Control**: The average blood sugar level, as measured by the hemoglobin A1C test, decreased from 9.0 percent in 1996 to 8.1 percent in 2014 in the AI/AN population. Every percentage point drop in A1C results can reduce risk of eye, kidney, and nerve complications by up to 40 percent.

The SDP program is unquestionably improving the lives of the nearly 30 million Americans living with diabetes while also reducing the long-term health care expenditures related to its complications. However, further investment in the SDP is essential to conducting clinical trials, planning next steps for research programs, and effectively allocating research resources — all of which play an important role in helping to better treat, prevent, and ultimately cure diabetes.

Thanks to your leadership, the Special Diabetes Program has received strong bipartisan support in recent years. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure this program remains a beacon of hope for all Americans living with diabetes.

Sincerely,

Tom Reed  
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