

Dear Colleague Letter Sent on Listserv:

Support Funding for NIH Eating Disorders Research

This National Eating Disorders Awareness month, please join Representatives Kendra Horn (D-OK-05) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-01) in urging Appropriations Report Language for increased eating disorders research funding under the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

The closing date for this letter is March 6, 2020

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to sign a letter requesting the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Related Agencies (LHHS) include Committee Report language urging a continuation of and an increase in multi-institute eating disorders research in the FY 2021 LHHS Appropriations bill.

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses that collectively affect 30 million Americans during their lifetimes,¹ and have the second highest mortality rate out of any psychiatric illness, only second to opioid use.² Eating disorders are complex, bio-psycho-social illnesses that affect people of every age, race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, and when left untreated, can lead to a number of medical conditions such as Diabetes, PCOS, Heart Failure, Osteoporosis, and Kidney Failure.

Despite the severity of the medical complications associated with eating disorders, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), have historically underfunded eating disorders research. The NIH only spends ~0.11% of its budget on eating disorders research and National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) spends ~1.27% of its budget on eating disorders research, for a disease that affects 9% of the U.S. population during the lifetime and has the highest average cost out of any mental health condition.^{3 4}

Join us in requesting inclusion of report language to continue and increase multi-institute eating disorders research. To sign-on, please reach out to Victoria Bautista in Congresswoman Horn's office at Victoria.Bautista@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Kendra Horn [D-OK-05]
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Brian Fitzpatrick [R-PA-01]
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

¹ Judson, J.I., Hiripi, E., Pope, H.G., & Kessler, R.C. (2007). The Prevalence and correlates of eating disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Biological Psychiatry*, 61(3), 348-358.

² Arcelus, J., Mitchell, A.J., Wales, J., & Nielsen, S. (2011). Mortality rates in patients with anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders. A meta-analysis of 36 studies. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 68(7), 724-731.

³ <https://www.hhs.gov/about/budget/fy2018/budget-in-brief/nih/index.html>

⁴ Owens PL (AHRQ), Fingar KR (IBM Watson Health), McDermott KW (IBM Watson Health), Muhuri PK (AHRQ), Heslin KC (AHRQ). Inpatient Stays Involving Mental and Substance Use Disorders, 2016. HCUP Statistical Brief #249. March 2019. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb249-Mental-Substance-Use-Disorder-Hospital-Stays-2016.pdf

March 11, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services,
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2021 Labor, Health & Human Services, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations Bill, we urge you to include report language for increased eating disorders research funding within multiple institutes through the Office of the Director under the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses that affect 30 million Americans during their lifetimes,⁵ and have the second highest mortality rate out of any psychiatric illness, only second to opioid use.⁶ Eating disorders are complex, bio-psycho-social illnesses, that affect people of every age, race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, and when left untreated, are associated with a number of medical conditions such as Diabetes, PCOS, Heart and Kidney Failure, and Osteoporosis.

Despite the severity of eating disorders, the NIH has historically underfunded eating disorders research. NIH spends ~0.11% of its budget on this research area between 2015-2018, and ~1.27% of the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) budget on eating disorders research over the same time period, for a disease that affects 9% of the U.S. population during their lifetime and has the highest treatment cost out of any mental health condition.^{7 8}

While underfunded, multiple institutes within NIH have regularly invested in eating disorders research given the complex, co-morbid conditions. From 2015-2018 an average of 44% of eating disorders research was carried out through institutes other than the NIMH. In turn, there are numerous unaddressed areas of research and opportunities to advance our understanding, prevention, identification, and treatment of the disorder, and we urge you to join us in encouraging the NIH to invest in multi-institute eating disorders research. The report language is as follows:

“Eating Disorders. — The Committee commends the NIH for supporting multi-institute research on the chronic, fatal, and serious mental illness of 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, PCOS, 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 strongly urges the NIH to increase funding 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 the NIH to inform the Committee on the steps taken to increase research funding for eating disorders and measures taken to improve prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.”

We urge you to support inclusion of this language within the FY 2021 LHHS Appropriations package.

Sincerely,

⁵ Judson, J.I., Hiripi, E., Pope, H.G., & Kessler, R.C. (2007). The Prevalence and correlates of eating disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Biological Psychiatry*, 61(3), 348-358.

⁶ Arcelus, J., Mitchell, A.J., Wales, J., & Nielsen, S. (2011). Mortality rates in patients with anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders. A meta-analysis of 36 studies. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 68(7), 724-731.

⁷ <https://www.hhs.gov/about/budget/fy2018/budget-in-brief/nih/index.html>; https://report.nih.gov/categorical_spending.aspx

⁸ Owens PL (AHRQ), Fingar KR (IBM Watson Health), McDermott KW (IBM Watson Health), Muhuri PK (AHRQ), Heslin KC (AHRQ). Inpatient Stays Involving Mental and Substance Use Disorders, 2016. HCUP Statistical Brief #249. March 2019. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb249-Mental-Substance-Use-Disorder-Hospital-Stays-2016.pdf