

September 16, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the Endocrine Society, the world's largest professional organization of endocrinologists, I'm writing to urge you to reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program as part of the Continuing Resolution that will soon be considered by the Congress. This critically important program funds vital research on type 1 diabetes and important programs that prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

As you know, the Special Diabetes Program (SDP) is part of a set of vital healthcare programs that are set to expire on November 30th. SDP is made up of two programs - the Special Diabetes Program for Type 1 Diabetes and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians. Funding from SDP Type 1 has been used to advance research to delay the onset of type 1 diabetes and has accelerated progress on an artificial pancreas. The Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) addresses the disproportionate burden that type 2 diabetes has on American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN). Through SDPI, more than 400 treatment and education programs on type 2 diabetes have been implemented in AIAN communities.

Since 2019, SDP has experienced four short-term extensions lasting between several weeks and several months. Under normal circumstances, short-term extensions have not been beneficial for SDP. Short-term funding jeopardizes the viability of SDP resulting in interruptions on important research and cuts in services. However, a short-term extension of SDP during the current COVID-19 pandemic would be even more harmful. As a result of the pandemic, SDPI has reported that nearly 1 in 5 programs have had to furlough employees, including healthcare workers, over the past six months. Roughly 1 in 4 SDPI programs have also reported delaying essential purchases of medical equipment to treat and monitor diabetes due to funding uncertainty. SDPI programs would likely face



additional budget constraints under a short-term extension. Funding for SDP Type 1 is needed to understand the impact that COVID-19 has had on people with diabetes. Research has shown that people with type 1 diabetes were 3.5 times more likely to die in the hospital from COVID-19 than those without diabetes. Further research is needed to understand why people with type 1 diabetes are at a greater risk when diagnosed with COVID-19.

SDP needs viable long-term funding to ensure that the program can deliver on important research and prevention efforts. We ask that you reauthorize SDP for 5 years at \$150 million per program, per year. Providing a long-term reauthorization will ensure that SDP can deliver on these important initiatives during the pandemic.

We appreciate your attention and consideration of this important issue. If you have any questions, please reach out to Rob Goldsmith at rgoldsmith@endocrine.org.

Sincerely,

Gary D. Hammer, MD, PhD
President
Endocrine Society