

April 1, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chairwoman
The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on
Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Room H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

The 10 undersigned member organizations of the NIAMS Coalition respectfully request that the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriate \$643 million for the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS) in FY 2020.

The NIAMS Coalition is an independent consortium of professional and voluntary organizations that are national in scope. These organizations raise awareness about NIAMS research into the basic understanding, causes, incidence, treatment, and prevention of diseases of the bones, joints, muscles, and skin. They are key partners of the NIAMS and serve as the voices of the patients and professionals for whom NIAMS works.

The NIH is the nation's preeminent medical research agency in the US and NIAMS is one of the 27 research centers and institutes that are organized under NIH's administrative umbrella. Established in 1986, the NIAMS supports research into the causes, treatment, and prevention of arthritis, autoimmune diseases like lupus, and musculoskeletal and skin diseases; the training of basic and clinical scientists to carry out this research; and the dissemination of information on research progress in these diseases.

During the last two decades, the funding available for NIAMS research agenda has been drastically cut. Between FY 2003 and FY 2015, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) lost 22% of its capacity to fund research due to budget cuts, sequestration, and inflationary losses. These reductions rippled throughout all of NIH's centers' and institutes' annual appropriations. In the years since 2016, congressional funding for NIH has offset the sequestration cuts and begun to close the inflation gap, but the total FY 2019 appropriations for NIH's centers and institutes are still nearly 10% lower than what they should have been these annual appropriations had kept pace with inflation in earlier years.

Compounding matters further, NIAMS annual appropriation continues to decline relative to the funding for other centers and institutes. NIAMS's FY 2019 appropriation, as a percentage of the total appropriations for all NIH centers and institutes, declined to 1.55 percent from a high of 1.73 percent in FY 2010.

NIAMS plays a vital role in funding research for a host of autoimmune diseases such as arthritis and lupus, as well as musculoskeletal diseases and a myriad of skin diseases. Increasing the appropriation for NIAMS to \$643 million will assure that the funding for the NIAMS's research portfolio keeps pace

with the cost of inflation in medical research and the funding appropriated to other NIH research centers and institutions.

We thank you for your consideration of our funding request and look forward to working with the Subcommittee to increase funding for NIAMS in FY 2020.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Rheumatology
Arthritis Foundation
Lupus Foundation of America
Muscular Dystrophy Association
National Eczema Association
National Psoriasis Foundation
Scleroderma Foundation
Society for Investigative Dermatology