

March 10, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro

Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger

Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole

Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray

Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy

Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
437 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby

Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
304 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt

Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
Committee on Appropriations
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Congressional Appropriations Leaders,

On behalf of tens of millions of Americans living with autoimmune, immune-mediated, and rare diseases, we write as the National Coalition of Autoimmune Patient Groups (NCAPG), a coalition of 50 organizations representing numerous diseases, such as lupus, psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, Sjögren's, celiac disease, relapsing polychondritis, and the many other patients who are immunocompromised who continue to face serious challenges living with, treating, and responding to the COVID-19 virus. On their behalf, we urge your support of supplemental funding to ensure access to sufficient supplies of essential medications that enable both prevention and treatment for COVID-19 patients.

The NCAPG's mission is to convene, support, and amplify the voice of autoimmune, immune-mediated disease patients and patient groups to enhance capacity, collaboration, and provide relief. As representatives of autoimmune disorders, the conditions and the treatment for such conditions can result in suppressed and malfunctioning immune systems. Over the last two years, Congress has invested in developing and procuring vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics. But further investments are needed if our nation is going to continue to combat both the current and potential impact of COVID and new variants, especially for our patient community.

It is vitally critical for people with autoimmune conditions and those who are immune-deficient to have access to therapeutics given the challenges with the vaccine and, even if vaccinated, the higher likelihood of a more severe response to the virus. Mainly as we work to return to a sense of normalcy and other precautions begin to become optional, access to therapeutics will become even more critical over the coming months. Thus, funding is desperately needed at Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for further procurement of existing COVID-19 medical countermeasures (MCMs) as well as investment in second-generation therapeutics. The proposed COVID-19 supplemental package includes significant funds for procurement of existing MCMs and funds for research and development in next-generation vaccines.

While the efforts of the federal government and private sector have yielded thirteen COVID-19 therapies deployed under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), patients still lack access to reliable and effective treatments that reduce hospitalizations and the severity of infections. Unfortunately, several authorized treatments have also proven ineffective against the Omicron strain of COVID-19.

We recognize the Committee's proposed increase in funding for the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) in the pending Fiscal Year 2022 Omnibus Appropriations legislation and urge the Committee to consider increasing that funding level in conference to ensure that the federal government has sufficient resources to fulfill its procurement needs.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and BARDA, several new investigational COVID-19 therapies are completing clinical studies and could be authorized by FDA in the coming weeks and months. We cannot risk delays in the manufacturing and distribution of these new drugs at a time when patients and our health care system need them the most, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic has claimed the lives of nearly 960,000 Americans. Yet, millions of patients in the United States and worldwide still have limited access to effective treatments against COVID-19.

As you complete work on the Fiscal Year 2022 Omnibus Appropriations legislation and consider the HHS emergency supplemental request, we urge you to support the millions of autoimmune patients and provide additional funds for the procurement and distribution of new COVID-19 therapies.

Sincerely,

Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.

Celiac Disease Foundation
Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research
Dysautonomia International
Nevada Chronic care Collaborative
APS Foundation of America
Caregiver Action Network
Retire Safe
Immune Deficiency Foundation
American Kidney Foundation
The Vasculitis Foundation
Chronic Care Policy Alliance
Alliance for Aging Research

Arthritis Foundation
Digestive Disease National Coalition
American Liver Foundation
Color of Crohn's and Chronic Illness Inc.
International Foundation for Autoimmune -
Autoinflammatory and Arthritis (AiArthritis)
Alliance for Patient Access
American Behcet's Disease Association
HealthyWomen
Men's Health Network
Global Healthy Living Foundation
Allergy & Asthma Network