

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 16, 2017

Dr. Francis S. Collins
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Director Collins,

This letter is to request your support for a sustained research effort from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to find a cure for hepatitis B. As you know, the National Academies of Sciences recently reported that the elimination of hepatitis B in the United States is within reach and that the major obstacle is the low public priority given to this goal. Given the recent developments and breakthroughs that have been made related to hepatitis C, we respectfully request that the NIH increase its commitment to this goal and commit to finding a cure for hepatitis B.

Earlier this year, the Hepatitis B Foundation convened a virtual workshop to create a consensus blueprint (“Roadmap for a Cure”) to identify the additional research needed to find a cure for hepatitis B, and to improve the outcome of liver cancer. More than 30 of the world’s leading experts were asked to identify the research questions that must be funded and answered to find a cure for hepatitis B. This effort resulted in the preparation of a consensus blueprint document for a cure titled “A Research Agenda for Curing Hepatitis B Virus Infection”. As follow up to the preparation of this blueprint, the Hepatitis B Foundation met with the leadership of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to brief them on the content of the blueprint and to seek their support. This letter requests your continued support for NIAID, NIDDK, and NCI as they consider the targeted calls for research outlined in that blueprint.

Nationally, around 2 million individuals are chronically infected with the disease. Globally, more than 250 million individuals live with chronic hepatitis B, which contributes to around 800,000 deaths each year, primarily due to liver cancer—the second leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide. However, despite this widespread epidemic, NIH research funding for hepatitis B has declined by 12.5 percent since 2012, and the President has proposed a further decrease of 24.4 percent next year. The Hepatitis B Foundation, based on the scientific recommendations of the blueprint, has come to the consensus that doubling research funding for hepatitis B every year for

six years would lead to better treatments and a cure—such an investment in public health surely seems worthwhile.

We appreciate your consideration of this important issue, and look forward to working with you as we continue this fight to combat hepatitis B through appropriate investments that will lead to more effective treatments for the disease and eventually cures.

Sincerely,



Grace Meng
U.S. Representative

Mazie K. Hirono
U.S. Senator



Brian Fitzpatrick
U.S. Representative



Barbara Lee
U.S. Representative



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
U.S. Representative