

Encourage Ongoing Research and Support Public Health Activities Focused on Sleep and Sleep Disorders

Dear Colleague:

Please join me in supporting federal research and public health activities critical to advancing our scientific understanding of sleep, circadian, and sleep disorders. Sleep impacts nearly every system of the body and affects the progression of many medical conditions. Millions of Americans are impacted by sleep disorders and, in general, healthy sleep is a major public health and safety issue.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has been a major catalyst for sleep research over recent years, but we still lack diagnostic tools, innovative therapies, and medical information that improves outcomes for patients impacted by serious and disabling sleep disorders. The HEAL initiative in particular is showing tremendous promise through studying the relationship between sleep and opioid addiction challenges. Timely committee recommendations and encouragement will ensure NIH continues to advance scientific understanding in this area to the benefit of sleep disorders patient across the country.

The Department of Defense (DoD) has also been leading critical research efforts in the areas sleep deprivation and the impact of sleep on mental health issues by including “sleep disorders and restriction” within the DoD’s Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP). For FY 2021, inclusion in the PRMRP should continue so that this promising research can continue to move forward.

Last year, the House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill proposed establishing a *Chronic Disease Education and Awareness Program* at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Such a program would allow the stakeholder community to compete for collaborative funding opportunities that support timely and relevant public health efforts in targeted areas. This program would create a tremendous opportunity for the sleep disorders community, which currently lacks a dedicated public health program with CDC despite the notable public health impact of issues related to healthy sleep.

To sign on, please contact Anthony Theissen at Anthony.Theissen@mail.house.gov or x54176 as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Adam Schiff

Dear Chairs DeLauro and Visclosky and Ranking Members Cole and Calvert:

As you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, we write to request the inclusion of timely committee recommendations on sleep and sleep disorders within the Committee Report accompanying the House FY 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations Bill. We would also like to request the continued inclusion of “sleep disorders and restriction” as conditions eligible for study through the Department of Defense (DoD) Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP) within the Committee Report accompanying the FY 2021 DoD Appropriations Bill.

Sleep impacts nearly every system of the body and affects the progression of many medical conditions. Millions of Americans are impacted by sleep disorders and, in general, healthy sleep is a major public health and safety issue. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently sunset the only public health effort focused on sleep, the National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project (NHSAP), citing a lack of dedicated resources. For FY 2020, the House LHHS Appropriations Bill proposed a “Chronic Disease Education and Awareness Program,” which would utilize a competitive grant process to strengthen the science base for prevention, education, and public health awareness for a variety of chronic diseases, including sleep disorders. We ask for the inclusion of this program once again for FY 2021 and ask the Committee to provide \$5,000,000 for this new effort to address chronic diseases that do not already have a specialized account under the CDC.

With the ongoing investments in the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the sleep and circadian research portfolio has grown and facilitated meaningful scientific progress, which includes the 2017 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. While this progress is certainly encouraging, more work is needed to deliver breakthroughs to improve outcomes for patients suffering from various sleep disorders. Therefore, we respectfully recommend the Committee include the following report language in the accompanying report of its FY 2021 LHHS bill:

“National Center on Sleep Disorders Research [NCSDR].—The committee commends the ongoing work of NCSDR to reinvigorate sleep, circadian, and sleep disorders research activities across the government, and notes impactful new projects through the HEAL Initiative and studying the relationship between sleep and stroke. NCSDR is encouraged to continue to build meaningful partnerships across federal agencies and further coordinate research in this area.”

“Sleep Disorders.—The Committee notes the leadership of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) in advancing research into under-represented sleep disorders, such as narcolepsy and restless legs syndrome. NINDS is encouraged to bolster these activities and advance initiatives that advance scientific understanding of specific sleep disorders impacting patients.”

Finally, The DoD is a leader on sleep research with critical projects on combat readiness, fatigue, and the relationship between sleep and mental health challenges. These projects are often coordinated with NIH and the Veterans Administration, but they are made possible through the PRMRP. To that end, we request the continued inclusion of “sleep disorders and restriction” on the PRMRP’s annual eligible conditions through the Committee Report accompanying the FY 2021 DoD Appropriations Bill.

On behalf of the sleep disorders community, we appreciate your consideration of our requests and your willingness to engage on these critical issues.

Sincerely,