

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 1, 2006

Elias Zerhouni, Ph.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

As members of the Congressional Working Group and Caucus on Parkinson's Disease, we are writing to express our strong support for the National Institute on Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Collaborative Centers for Parkinson's Disease Environmental Research (CCPDER) Consortium Program, a five year, \$20 million program with funding set to end in August 2007. The CCPDERs have done an excellent job in fostering interdisciplinary approaches to studying gene-environment interactions in Parkinson's disease and speeding the translation of research findings to intervention and prevention strategies.

We understand that NIEHS has decided to issue a Request for Applications for a new round of Centers, the Collaborative Centers for Neurodegenerative Disease Environmental Research (CCNDER), in January 2007. This new CCNDER program will expand the scope of research of the original CCPDER centers to include other neurodegenerative diseases in addition to Parkinson's, but at the same funding level as the current Parkinson's centers program. We are delighted that the NIEHS is building on the successful CCPDER model to enhance scientific discovery for other neurodegenerative diseases; however, we are concerned that the expanded program with flat funding will inevitably lead to a cutback in the outstanding Parkinson's research that is currently being conducted by the current program.

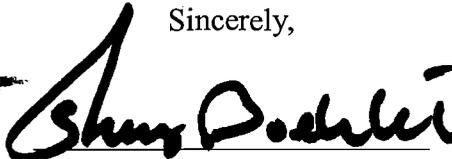
Given the importance of translational research and identifying the environmental causes of disease in addition to the successful track record of the current Parkinson's centers program, we strongly encourage NIEHS to increase overall funding for the new CCNDER program at a level commensurate with the expanded research portfolio called for in the upcoming RFA.

Thank you for your commitment to Parkinson's disease research and we look forward to hearing from you regarding this issue of mutual importance.

Sincerely,



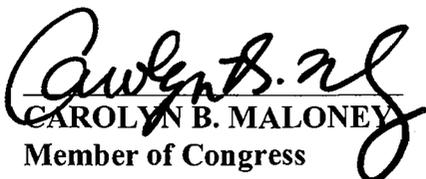
DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senate



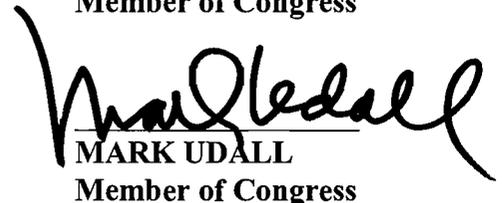
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