United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 20, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Reid:

We are writing to thank you for your strong and enduring support of the Special Diabetes Program and ask that you ensure that federal investments continue to be made in this vital program.

For almost twenty years, the Special Diabetes Program – comprised of the Special Diabetes Program for Type 1 Diabetes Research and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians – has worked to improve the lives of the more than 29 million Americans who have diabetes and has provided a solid return on a modest federal investment.

Diabetes continues to be one of this country's most costly diseases in both human and economic terms. It is the leading cause of kidney disease, blindness in working-age adults, and non-traumatic amputations as well as a major cause of heart disease and stroke. More than one in five health care dollars and one in three Medicare dollars are spent on people with diabetes. It is estimated that diabetes costs our nation more than $245 billion annually.

These costs are expected to increase as the number of people with diabetes continues to grow. Between 2001 and 2009 diabetes among Americans under the age of 20 increased by 21 percent, and over the next 25 years, the number of Americans living with diabetes is predicted to double and related health costs to nearly triple.

While the increase in these statistics is very concerning, the Special Diabetes Program is making meaningful progress. The program funds research that is leading directly to new insights and therapies that are improving the lives of those with diabetes and accelerating progress towards curing and preventing the disease. The program is also making a tremendous difference in the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives, who are disproportionately burdened with type 2 diabetes at nearly three times the rate of the national average.

Some notable developments from the Special Diabetes Program for Type 1 include:

- The development of the artificial pancreas system, which will reduce costly and burdensome type 1 diabetes complications and improve quality of life for those with the disease. According to one study, Medicare could save roughly $1 billion over 25 years with the use of artificial pancreas systems in adults.

- The discovery that intensive blood glucose control can cut in half the onset of impaired kidney function in people with type 1 diabetes. This has the potential to reduce the prevalence of end-stage renal disease (ESRD) and could save Medicare roughly $126 billion over 25 years.

- Research that determined therapies to reverse vision loss and treatment for patients with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

- On-going identification of environmental factors that could influence the onset of type 1 diabetes. Once completed, this research could determine triggers and strategies to prevent the onset of the disease.

The Special Diabetes Program for Indians is also making a huge difference in the health of American Indian and Alaska Native individuals. In these communities, the program has significantly increased the availability of quality diabetes treatment and prevention programs. These programs have resulted in significant improvements in diabetes care, including better glucose control, reduction in LDL cholesterol, and a 48 percent decline in the incidence of end stage renal disease in the targeted populations.

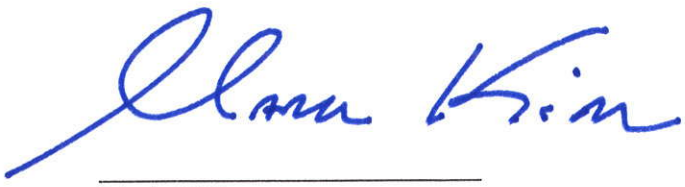
These are only a few of the many developments that are the result of the Special Diabetes Program. The groundbreaking discoveries made possible by this program are already improving care for the more than 29 million Americans with diabetes. They have the potential not only to improve health outcomes for individuals with diabetes, but also to reduce long-term health expenditures from costly complications. Further investment in the Special Diabetes Program is essential to continue vital large-scale trials, plan next steps for research programs, and most effectively allocate research resources – all of which play an important part in helping to better treat, prevent, and ultimately cure type 1 diabetes.

We thank you for your past support of the Special Diabetes Program, which has received overwhelming bipartisan support in the past, and look forward to working with you to ensure that it continues to capitalize on the significant achievements to date and explore the opportunities that remain ahead.

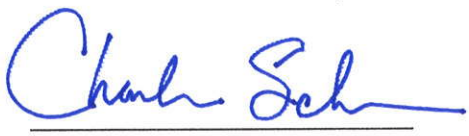
Sincerely,

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Mark Kirk
United States Senator



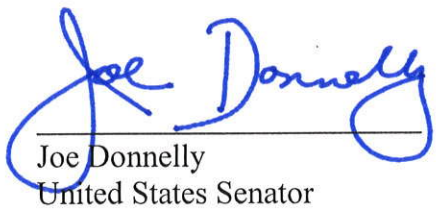
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Thad Cochran
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

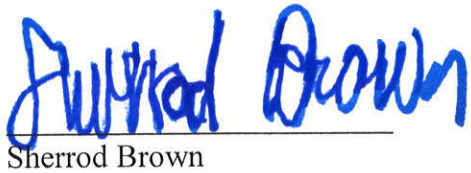
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

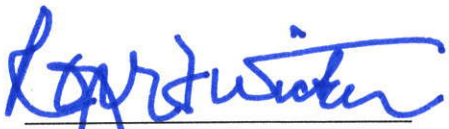


Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Chuck Grassley
United States Senator

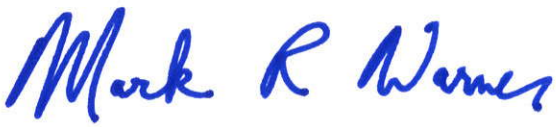


Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

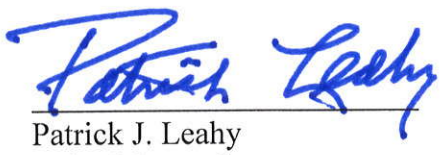


Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator

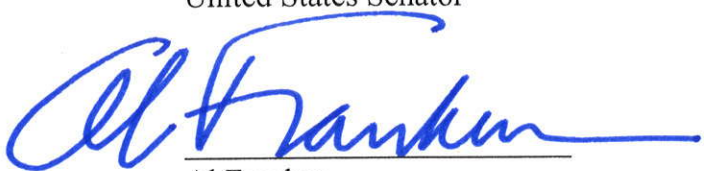
Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator



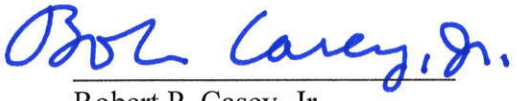
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



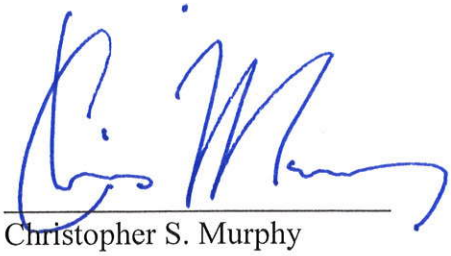
Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator

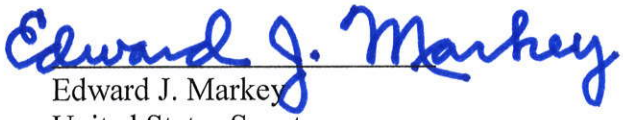
Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

John Thune
United States Senator

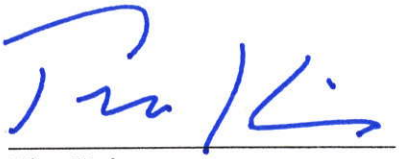
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

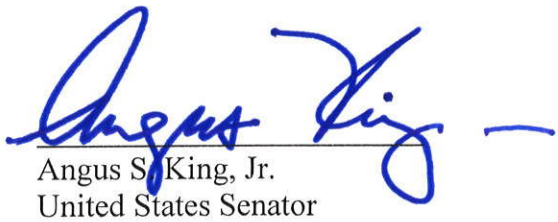


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

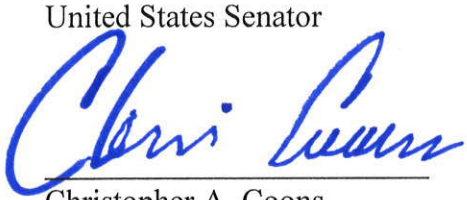


Tim Kaine
United States Senator

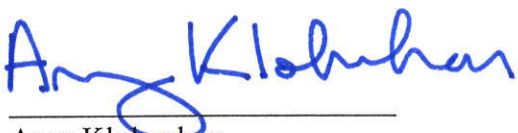
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



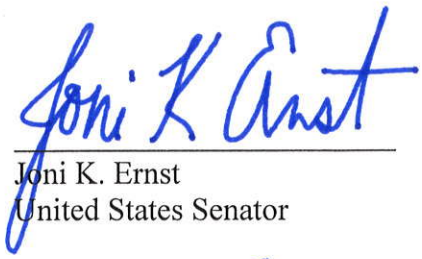
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



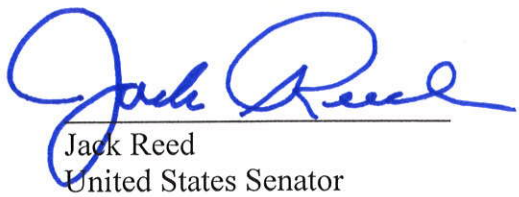
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



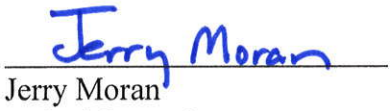
Jack Reed
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

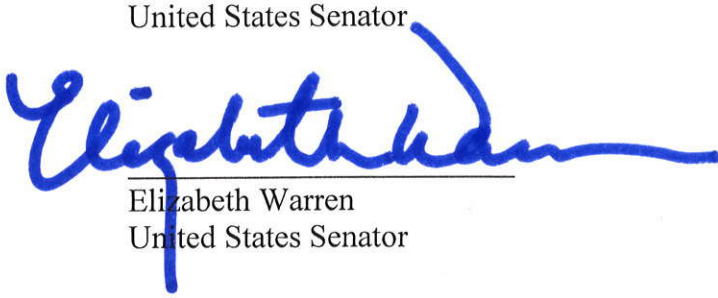
Richard Burr
United States Senator

Bill Nelson
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

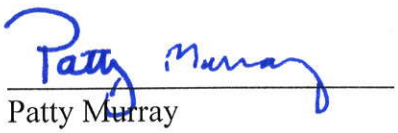


Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

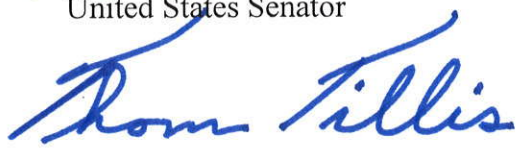


Patty Murray
United States Senator

Michael B. Enzi
United States Senator

Jeff Sessions
United States Senator

Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Tim Scott
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator

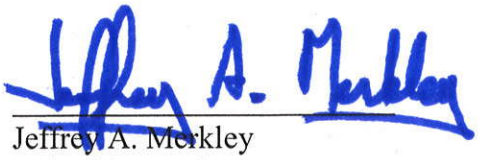
Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Richard C. Shelby
United States Senator

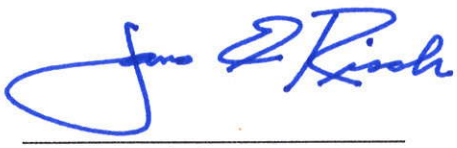
Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

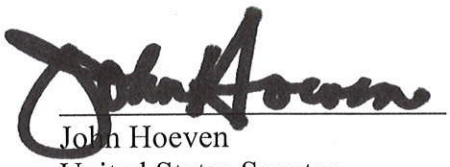
Marco Rubio
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator

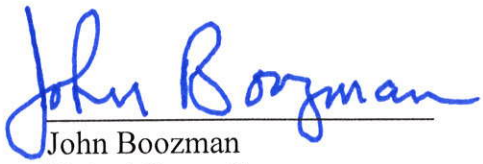
Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

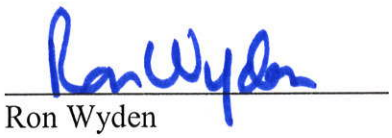


John Hoeven
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator