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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS
CHAIRMAN

December 17, 2003

Mr. Paul Tubiana
PO Box 21832
Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-1832

Dear Mr. Tubiana:

Knowing of your interest in diabetes issues, I write to provide you an update on recent legislative activity in Congress. As always I welcome your input on this critical issue.

As you may know, diabetes affects 18.2 million Americans a year and it is the fifth leading cause of death in the United States. However, nearly one-third of these cases are undiagnosed. It is a disease that disproportionately impacts the elderly population with over 18% of people aged 60 and over having diabetes. Among our children, we have seen a startling trend of increased rates of Type-2 diabetes, or adult-onset diabetes. The citizens of Texas are not immune to impact of diabetes. In the 28th Congressional District alone, 97,000 new diabetes cases have been reported since the year 2000.

I remain deeply committed to the improvement and expansion of diabetes education and prevention programs. This year I led an effort to double funding for the Centers for Disease Control's diabetes prevention programs, which are currently funded at \$63.8 million. Unfortunately due to budget constraints the programs received only a small increase of \$3.6 million. In addition, I have strongly supported efforts to increase funding for research initiatives. Research cannot only provide better treatment options, but it is also the key to the ultimate goal, a cure. With this in mind, I joined 213 of my colleagues in a letter to the House Appropriations Committee to push for additional funding for the National Institutes of Health.

Pending Legislation to Improve Diabetes Care and Research

I would like to provide you with an update of legislation I have supported in my efforts to fight diabetes. These bills have been assigned to committees and must now wait to be considered in the second session of 108th Congress.

HR 2236, *Access to Diabetes Screening Services Act of 2003* – This piece of legislation extends Medicare coverage for diabetes screening tests and services for high-risk individuals. If enacted, it would provide important prevention and screening tools in elderly patient care.

HR 3459, *Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act of 2003* – As a lead author and original co-sponsor of HR 3459, I worked to ensure the bill would address diabetes issues. HR 3459

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seeks to address the health disparities faced by communities of color and aims to improve health care coverage and services for these populations. The bill would give states the option to expand eligibility and streamline enrollment in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program in order to reduce the number of minorities without health insurance. This bill would also expand existing programs and create new ones to address the shortage of minority health care providers. In addition, the bill would create programs with the overall goal of reducing or eliminating health disparities, including providing grants for diabetes related initiatives. This bill received wide support from Senate and House Democrats, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus and various medical organizations.

HR 3178, *Health and Education Access for Students with Diabetes Act* – This legislation would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to prohibit interference by certain grant recipients with a student's treatment of his or her diabetes. This legislation will ensure that children struggling with diabetes can manage this disease during school hours and related activities.

Diabetes is a formidable opponent, but together we can enhance the quality of life of people living with the disease and also increase prevention and early detection efforts. Thank you for your leadership and advocacy on this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions on this or any other matter before Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ciro D. Rodriguez" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ciro D. Rodriguez
Member of Congress