

Statement of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI)

Prepared for the
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies

Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID)

Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, and Members of the Subcommittee, the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology (AAAAI) thanks you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) fiscal year (FY) 2021 appropriations bill. AAAAI respectfully requests the subcommittee to include a **\$6.1 million increase in funding for the Consortium on Food Allergy Research (CoFAR) which is within the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In addition, we request report language reflecting the importance of NIH engaging in trans-NIH research on food allergies.** Established in 1943, AAAAI is a professional organization with more than 7,000 members in the United States, Canada, and 72 other countries. This membership includes board certified allergist/immunologists, other medical specialists, allied health and related healthcare professionals – all with a special interest in the research and treatment of patients with allergic and immunological diseases.

Food Allergies

Food allergies affect 32 million Americans, including 6 million children. Each year, more than 200,000 Americans require emergency medical care for allergic reactions to food – equivalent to one trip to the emergency room every three minutes.

The Consortium on Food Allergy Research – CoFAR – was established by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) within the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) in 2005. Over the following 15 years, CoFAR discovered genes associated with an increased risk for peanut allergy and has also identified the most promising potential treatments for egg and peanut immunotherapy, among many other accomplishments. Breakthroughs like these, scaled across other major food allergies, can significantly improve the quality of life for tens of millions of Americans. Its annual \$6.1 million budget is a relatively small portion within NIH's almost \$40 billion budget, yet CoFAR has been able to achieve massive strides in the study of food allergy prevention and treatment.

AAAAI enthusiastically supports an increase in funding for CoFAR of \$6.1 million, annually, bringing its yearly budget up to **\$12.2 million**. With its relatively low current level of funding, CoFAR has been able to accomplish breakthroughs in the under-researched field of food allergies. It is crucial that we continue investing at proportional levels given the scale of this condition which impacts 10.8 percent of the U.S. population.

AAAAI also requests that the Subcommittee's report accompanying the FY21 Labor/HHS appropriation reflects the importance of trans-NIH research on food allergies. AAAAI strongly

supports the following NIAID report language submitted by Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) that acknowledges the groundbreaking work of CoFAR and encourages robust investment to expand its research breadth and network.

Food Allergies.—The Committee recognizes the serious issue of food allergies which affect approximately eight percent of children and ten percent of adults in the United States. The Committee commends the ongoing work of NIAID in supporting a total of 17 clinical sites for this critical research, including seven sites as part of the Consortium of Food Allergy Research (CoFAR). The Committee includes \$12,200,000, an increase of \$6,100,000, for CoFAR to expand its clinical research network to add new centers of excellence in food allergy clinical care and to select such centers from those with a proven expertise in food allergy research.

In addition to AAAAI, the CoFAR funding request and report language are supported by the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology; Allergy & Asthma Network; Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America; Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Connection Team; Food Allergy Research and Education; and International FPIES Association.

Penicillin Allergy Testing

AAAAI also wishes to express its appreciation to the subcommittee for the inclusion of language regarding the importance of penicillin allergy testing in the FY20 appropriations bill. The discovery of penicillin opened the door to medical innovation allowing surgeries to be performed, organs to be transplanted, as well as combat wounds and burn victims to be treated. AAAAI encourages more widespread and routine performance of penicillin skin testing for patients with a history of allergy to penicillin or another beta-lactam drug (e.g, ampicillin or amoxicillin). Penicillin allergy testing can accurately identify the approximately 9 of 10 patients who, despite reporting a history of penicillin allergy, can safely receive penicillin. On behalf of the patients we serve, thank you for your leadership in giving penicillin allergy testing the attention it deserves.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. Please contact Sheila Heitzig, JD, MNM, CAE, AAAAI Director of Practice and Policy, at (414) 272-6071 or sheitzig@aaaai.org if you have any questions or would like additional information.