

Melanoma Research Alliance

September 26, 2012

The Honorable Brian Bilbray
2410 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
2332 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Bilbray, Maloney and DeLauro,

On behalf of the Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA), thank you for your work on the “Life-Threatening Diseases Compassion Through Combination Therapy Act of 2012”. This is a very important subject for those of us who are working to accelerate scientific progress with the ultimate goal of bringing effective treatments to patients. The mission of MRA is to eliminate suffering and death from deadly skin cancer, and we work with the scientific community to identify meaningful therapies, often in the form of combinations of two or more drugs, to achieve this mission.

As you know, Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer, and it is one of the cancers whose incidence is increasing fastest in this country. In the United States each year, more than 70,000 Americans are diagnosed with melanoma: one every eight minutes. More than 9,000 Americans die of melanoma each year: one every hour.

MRA is the largest private funder of melanoma research having awarded more than \$38 million since 2008 to cutting-edge programs throughout the world. Our ultimate goal is to find a cure by funding the most promising melanoma research worldwide that will accelerate progress and improve outcomes for patients and all who are at risk. MRA funds research programs that are making transformative advances in the prevention, diagnosis, staging, and treatment of melanoma. Our scientific and medical advisory panels are comprised of the world’s leaders in melanoma research and practitioners that are on the cutting edge of diagnosing, treating, and ultimately curing this disease.

In the last three years the field of melanoma research has seen enormous progress, as new understanding about the disease has developed and revolutionary therapies directly tied to that knowledge have been brought to market for patients. However we have much work to do in order to translate this progress into long-lasting results for all melanoma patients. A critical component in this quest is the importance of developing combinatorial therapies in an expeditious fashion. While the promise of combination therapy is clear, the execution of this innovative form of treatment is often hindered by barriers to collaboration, particularly early in

the development phase of a drug. This legislation would allow for appropriate incentives for researchers and pharmaceutical manufacturers to participate in trials to advance such therapies.

We applaud the bill's sponsors for recognizing the valuable insight that can be provided by all stakeholders in the development and execution of combination therapy trials. Sustained investment is critical and depends on our ability to break down barriers and overcome obstacles that slow the scientific process. We also understand that guidance from the FDA on the protections and responsibilities of all parties in these efforts will lead to further participation and progress.

This legislation is a thoughtful, bi-partisan approach to advancing access for patients to the most cutting edge, life-saving therapies. The science of combination therapies holds incredible promise in melanoma as in other life threatening diseases. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the "Life-Threatening Diseases Compassion Through Combination Therapy Act of 2012" and look forward to working with you to advance these important goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Selig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy K.D. Selig
MRA President and Chief Executive Officer