

# Melanoma Research Alliance

May 10, 2012

Congressman Brian Bilbray  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2410 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Bilbray:

The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is grateful for your leadership in the fight against melanoma and strongly supports your legislation, the Melanoma Research Act of 2012. By establishing a Skin Cancer Research Fund within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), this bill will advance research efforts to combat deadly skin cancer at a time of incredible opportunity in the field.

The MRA is the largest private funder of research focused on accelerating scientific discovery to better prevent, detect, and treat melanoma and has funded 97 melanoma research projects around the world. MRA's funding is designed to be seed money to catalyze transformative ideas in that will significantly advance options for patients and those at risk. Our program seeks to leverage the critical support that NIH provides to research laboratories dedicated to basic and clinical studies of deadly skin cancer.

Melanoma is the deadliest of all skin cancers. If caught early, melanoma can be successfully treated by surgery. In contrast, those diagnosed with widespread metastatic disease (Stage IV) have a median survival of less than one year. In the United States alone, melanoma incidence has tripled over the past three decades. More than 76,250 new cases and more than 9,180 deaths are expected in the United States in 2012.

Alarming, melanoma is increasing among young people and is now the number one cancer diagnosed in women aged 25-29. Scientists attribute this to the increasing use of tanning beds, which have been shown to increase the risk of melanoma by up to 75%. By dedicating the funds raised from the recently adopted tax on the use of tanning beds to skin cancer research, your legislation helps to emphasize the dangers of indoor tanning while augmenting resources available for lifesaving research.

Recent scientific and clinical advances are providing hope for patients and those at risk. Despite this progress, these will not be the cure for most, and much more needs to be done until melanoma is effectively addressed. Increased resources will expand upon these new opportunities for scientists to drive the next generation of tools and treatments. MRA supports efforts to increase funds for melanoma research and commends you for your leadership in bringing this important piece of legislation forward.

Sincerely,



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