Dear Colleague:

As you know, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), working in concert with several other government agencies and private entities, launched the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative in 2013.

The human brain was once thought to be so complex as to be beyond our ability to understand. Its 100 billion nerve cells and their 100 trillion connections to each other are almost unimaginable. But this Initiative creates the opportunity to produce a clearer, more dynamic picture of the brain that can demonstrate, for the first time, how individual cells and complex neural circuits interact in time and space. This will require the development and use of technologies that do not presently exist.

This project has been guided by a high-level working group, composed of expert scientists from around the nation. Its planning process sought input broadly from the scientific community, patient advocates, and the general public. Through a series of reports, this project has moved forward to the release of a plan carrying the Initiative through FY2025, with specific goals, milestones, and deliverables.

Ultimately, the technologies developed through the BRAIN Initiative may help reveal the underlying pathology of a vast array of brain disorders and provide new therapeutic avenues to treat, cure, and even prevent a wide variety of neurological and psychiatric conditions that afflict up to 50 million Americans.

This is an ambitious project and it will need a sustained commitment over many years. Robust funding of the NIH is essential for this Initiative, or any initiative by a similar name, to continue to move forward.

If you have questions or would like to sign the letter, please contact Kristen Donheffner (Blumenauer) at kristen.donheffner@mail.house.gov, Megan Perez (McMorris Rodgers) at megan.perez@mail.house.gov, Hayden Rooke-Ley (Pascarella) at hayden.rooke-ley@mail.house.gov, or Scott Dziengelski (Murphy) at scott.dziengelski@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

Tim Murphy
Member of Congress
April 6, 2017

Hon. Tom Cole, Chair
House Labor-HHS Subcommittee
2467 Rayburn HOB
Washington DC 20515

Hon. Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
House Labor-HHS Subcommittee
2413 Rayburn HOB
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We are writing to respectfully request that your subcommittee include robust funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to fund the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative, or any initiative by a similar name.

Brain disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, autism, epilepsy, schizophrenia, depression, and traumatic brain injury, are projected to be some of the most disabling and costly chronic diseases in the 21st century. One in three Americans will have a brain or nervous system disorder sometime in their life and the cost of treating neurological disorders is more than $500 billion each year. These statistics are grave, and regrettably we do not currently know enough about the brain to begin to meet this health and economic challenge. The BRAIN Initiative seeks to change that.

Led by an inter-disciplinary team of scientists, the BRAIN Initiative is a joint private-public effort. The Initiative will continue to foster development of technologies to reveal the underlying pathology of brain disorders – both neurological and psychiatric. By understanding and mapping the human brain, we will enter a new era of discoveries of treatments, cures, and methods of prevention of these disorders that afflict up to 50 million of our fellow Americans.

Robust funding of the NIH, and subsequently the BRAIN Initiative, will enable the United States to remain a leader of biomedical research and to address the devastation wrought by neurological disorders. Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and we look forward to the subcommittee’s effort to successfully fund this critical Initiative.

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer

Cathy McMorris Rodgers

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Tim Murphy