

January 12, 2022

The Honorable Anthony Gonzalez
2458 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gonzalez:

The undersigned pediatric gastroenterologists practicing in Ohio and caring for children with gastrointestinal diseases and disorders, who oftentimes rely on medical nutrition as their treatment, ask for your cosponsorship of the *Medical Nutrition Equity Act* (S. 2013 / H.R. 3783). This legislation would require all payers — Medicaid, Medicare, Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, Children's Health Insurance Program and private insurance — to cover medical nutrition for the treatment of certain gastrointestinal conditions and metabolic disorders.

Ensuring pediatric patients with diseases and disorders of the gastrointestinal system have access to medical nutrition for their treatment has been a top advocacy priority for pediatric gastroenterologists and the 43 organizations that comprise [Patients and Providers for Medical Nutrition Equity](#).

Like my pediatric gastroenterology colleagues across the country, we are frustrated with the difficulty children in Ohio have in accessing medically necessary formulas that we prescribe for their treatment. For example, enteral use of medical nutrition is a successful treatment for moderate-to-severe Crohn's disease. There are no serious side effects of using medical nutrition. Comparatively, biologic therapy, which can also be used to treat Crohn's disease, can suppress the immune system and increase a patient's risk of infection. Biologics are also far more expensive than medical nutrition. Yet, insurance companies routinely cover biologics and other types of medications to treat Crohn's disease but will deny coverage of medical formulas.

When insurance companies deny medical nutrition or prevent timely access to treatment through lengthy appeals, the result can be cognitive and physical growth delays. We are also very frustrated these same insurance companies will cover medical nutrition if administered through a surgically placed tube, which carries risks, including infection, and added cost. These irrational coverage policies are bad for our patients and are costly to the health care system.

In 2016, Congress passed legislation that improved medical nutrition coverage for military families enrolled in TRICARE. We ask you to act to ensure those with gastrointestinal and metabolic diseases and disorders have access to the same level of access, regardless of type of insurance, by cosponsoring and supporting passage of the *Medical Nutrition Equity Act*.

Thank you in advance for your consideration our request. For more information, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Jennifer Dotson at Jennifer.Dotson@nationwidechildrens.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Boyle', written over a horizontal line.

Brendan M. Boyle MD, MPH
Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics
Co-Director - The Center for Pediatric and Adolescent Inflammatory Bowel Disease
Nationwide Children's Hospital

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Dotson', written in a cursive style.

Jennifer L. Dotson, MD, MPH
Co-Director, The Center for Pediatric and Adolescent Inflammatory Bowel Disease
Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics
Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
The Ohio State University College of Medicine
Principal Investigator, Center for Child Health Equity and Outcomes Research
Abigail Wexner Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital

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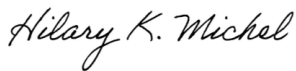
Jennifer Hellmann, MD
Assistant Professor
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition



Jacob A. Kurowski, MD
Medical Director of Pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Diseases
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition
Cleveland Clinic Children's



Ross Maltz, MD
Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics
Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Center for Microbial Pathogenesis
The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital
The Ohio State University, College of Medicine



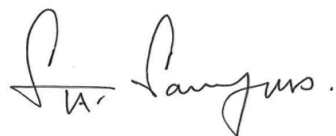
Hilary K. Michel, MD
Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics
Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
Nationwide Children's Hospital
The Ohio State University College of Medicine



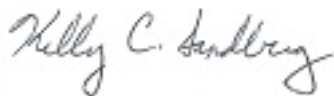
Phillip Minar, MD, MS
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center



Jonathan Moses, MD
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine
Director, Pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Disease Program
UH/Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital



Shehzad A Saeed, MD, FAAP, AGAF, NASPGHAN-F
Professor
Gastroenterology and Nutrition
Wright State University
Associate Chief Medical Officer
Physician Chief, Clinical Excellence
Physician Lead, Patient and Family Experience
Dayton Children's Hospital



Kelly C. Sandberg, MD
Pediatric Gastroenterologist
Chief Medical Quality Officer
Associate Professor
Dayton Children's Hospital, Wright State University



Kaitlin Whaley, MD
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition