

Representative _____,

As your constituent, I am writing to ask you to join the new bipartisan Congressional Celiac Disease Caucus. This Caucus is a major step forward to support the needs of the celiac disease community.

Once thought to be a rare childhood disease, celiac disease is now recognized as one of the world's most common genetic autoimmune disorders. At least one percent of the population has celiac disease, yet only about 20-30 percent of Americans with celiac disease are diagnosed. Additionally, prevalence of celiac disease has more than quadrupled since 1950 for reasons not yet understood.

Currently, there is no medication or a cure for celiac disease. The only course of action for more than 3 million Americans with celiac disease is a strict adherence to a gluten-free diet. Studies consistently show that between 30 to 50 percent of people living on a gluten-free diet continue to report disease symptoms (more than 200 symptoms are associated with the disease) and/or have intestinal damage.

Not only is living with celiac disease a daily struggle, this disease dramatically increases the patient's risk for other diseases, including other autoimmune diseases

- 6x increased risk for death from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- 3.1x increased risk for death from liver disease
- 2.6x increased risk for death from pneumonia
- 4x risk for small bowel cancer

We intend to have the newly created bipartisan Congressional Celiac Disease Caucus focus its attention on supporting innovative celiac disease research and advancing legislation that promises to ease the suffering of celiac patients.

We urge you to add your name to the growing list of Congressional Celiac Disease Caucus Members.

Please contact Pat Maillet at patrick.maillet@mail.house.gov with Rep. Betty McCollum's office with any questions.