

Opening Statement
Senator Susan Collins
“Progress Toward a Cure for Type I Diabetes: Research and the Artificial Pancreas”
July 26, 2017

Good morning. I am delighted to convene this biennial hearing in conjunction with the JDRF 2017 Children’s Congress to examine how Type 1 diabetes affects Americans of all ages. This is the tenth Children’s Congress that JDRF has held in Washington, D.C., and the ninth that I have chaired. It is a privilege to work with JDRF, whose commitment to finding a cure is unwavering.

Let me welcome our distinguished witnesses and the more than 160 delegates who have traveled to Washington from every state in the country and from around the world to this year’s Children’s Congress. Thank you for coming to share your personal stories and to tell us what it’s like to live with diabetes, just how serious it is, and why it is so important that Congress fund the research necessary to discover better treatments and, ultimately, a cure.

I want to give a special welcome to the two delegates from Maine, Charlie Albair of Gray who we will hear from later and Brady Chappell of Naples. I am proud that you are here representing our great state of Maine. A special welcome to our colleague, Senator Jeanne Shaheen, who joins us today as co-chair of the Senate Diabetes Caucus and a strong advocate for those living with the disease, including her own granddaughter.

Since founding the Senate Diabetes Caucus 20 years ago, I have learned a lot about the difficulties and heartbreak that this disease causes for so many American families as they await a cure.

Diabetes is a life-long condition that does not discriminate: it affects people of every age, race, and nationality. It also takes a major financial toll. The devastating disease costs the United States an estimated \$245 billion a year – a cost that is skyrocketing and projected to reach more than \$490 billion by 2020. Treatment of diabetes accounts for one out of three Medicare dollars. In fact, medical costs for Americans with diabetes are more than double those incurred by individuals without diabetes.

The statistics are overwhelming. The burden is particularly heavy for individuals with Type 1 diabetes. Usually diagnosed in childhood or adolescence, Type 1 diabetes is a lifelong disease that, to date, one can never outgrow.

Thankfully, there is good news for people with diabetes. Since I started the Senate Diabetes Caucus, funding for diabetes research has more than tripled from \$319 million in 1997 to more than a billion dollars this year. As a result, we have seen encouraging developments in the management, treatment, and potential cures for Type 1 diabetes.

One program in particular, at the National Institutes of Health, that has led to phenomenal discoveries is the Special Diabetes Program. This critical program provides \$150 million a year

for Type 1 diabetes research, in addition to the regular NIH appropriation for diabetes research at the NIH. Last year, the Special Diabetes Program led to the development of the first-ever, FDA-approved artificial pancreas, which can control blood glucose levels automatically and will revolutionize diabetes care. The Special Diabetes Program is changing the future of diabetes.

Today you will hear from some of our witnesses about how truly life-changing these innovative technologies can be. Other advances in technology, like continuous glucose monitors, are helping patients better control their blood glucose levels, which is key to preventing diabetes complications.

This year, we must pass legislation to extend the Special Diabetes Program which otherwise expires in September. This program is critical to our efforts to find better treatments, a means of prevention, and ultimately a cure for diabetes. The Special Diabetes Program has bipartisan support – in fact, 75 Senators signed a letter that I led in September 2016 urging that this federal investment in this program continue. With continuation of this investment, we can see a future in which the children here today can look forward to a better and brighter tomorrow.

It is so inspiring to look out and see this wave of Carolina Blue – each of you personally affected by diabetes. Let me take a moment to remember a personal hero who worked so passionately on behalf of all of you and testified at many Children's Congresses in the past. Mary Tyler Moore endured the ups and down of Type 1 diabetes for many years, but she focused much of her energy on finding a cure to improve the lives of others. We will honor Mary's legacy by continuing the work to which she committed so much of her life.

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