Dear Dr. Gordon,

Thank you for your service to our nation’s health. We are writing to request that the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) provide a timeline to phase out its support of the forced swim test, tail suspension test, foot shock, and social defeat experiments on animals.

Your office has stated that these tests “have largely failed to reveal translatable neural mechanisms, and lack specificity from a pharmacologic-validity perspective.”1 You have called the forced swim test “terrible” for most drugs, that its use has amounted to “wasted time and $,”2 and said that NIMH is “discouraging the use of certain behavioral assays, including the forced swim and tail suspension test, as models of depression.”3 Yet, you state “NIMH will continue to fund such studies.”4

A recently published study funded by NIMH found that the numerous “failures in the use of [the] mouse for preclinical studies” might have occurred because there are “so many differences in the cellular patterning of genes” between mice and humans.5 Indeed, the use of mice and other animals for depression research, particularly when it involves crude and cruel tests such as the ones in the video, has been cited as a major contributor to the failure of new drugs to treat this condition.

According to the NIH Grants Policy Statement, “NIH is the steward of medical and behavioral research for the Nation. Its mission is to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability.”6 Depression is not only devastating for the patient and their loved ones, but it is the leading cause of disability for people aged 15–44 years and is a huge

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4 Reardon
economic burden, with estimates of a $210.5 billion annual incremental cost (2010).\textsuperscript{7} Citizens deserve the very best science.

We urge NIMH to commit to ending their conduct and support of the forced swim and tail suspension tests as well as the use of foot shock and social defeat experiments on animals.

Sincerely,

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Brendan F. Boyle         Ken Calvert
Member of Congress      Member of Congress

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David N. Cicilline     Steve Cohen
Member of Congress      Member of Congress

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Tulsi Gabbard          Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress      Member of Congress

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Barbara Lee             Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress      Member of Congress