

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 26, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen 122
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Vice Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen 122
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Durbin:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 appropriations process, we write to respectfully request that you continue supporting valuable medical research conducted by the Department of Defense (DOD) through the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP). The initiatives under the CDMRP are critical to advancing our understanding of a variety of health issues and have a proven track record of contributing to medical breakthroughs. They deserve Congress's continuing support.

The CDMRP plays a unique role in the medical research community, investing in high-risk, high-reward research through a peer review system that also incorporates feedback from patient advocates. The research is both innovative and successful.

Much of the research conducted is particularly relevant to the military community, such as studies of diseases that occur in higher numbers among veterans, and diseases or injuries whose treatments may also be applicable to wounded service members. For example, grants from the CDMRP have been used to support research into:

- Neurological diseases such as ALS and multiple sclerosis that have higher rates of incidence among veterans. One such grant funded research into induced pluripotent stem cells derived from human skin to determine if there is the potential for therapeutic benefit of autologous stem-cell transplantation for ALS patients. Another grant developed a new imaging tool to measure changes in the brain as a result of multiple sclerosis, which will help researchers screen drug candidates and identify promising therapies for clinical trials.
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and how to identify it early. One CDMRP-funded grant was used to identify promising biomarkers that may help with early diagnosis of PTSD, and with developing novel treatments.
- Retinal prosthetics to help visually-impaired people to see. A new retinal prosthetic being developed with support from the CDMRP could eventually help people with vision loss due to combat-based eye injuries or retinal degenerative diseases see again.

- Rare diseases like scleroderma, a disease that affects connective tissue, and tuberous sclerosis complex, a genetic disorder that causes tumors to grow in many parts of the body. The research into scleroderma was conducted to understand how our skin works, and may help to develop methods of skin regeneration that could also be used for burn victims. The research into tuberous sclerosis complex has improved our understanding of other conditions and injuries, such as traumatic brain injury and diabetes.
- Different cancers. The Peer-Reviewed Cancer Research Program, a subset of the CDMRP, focuses on cancers that occur more frequently in service-members and veterans, such as melanoma. Other programs within the CDMRP focus on kidney cancer, ovarian cancer, breast cancer and prostate cancer.
- Autism. A child with an autism spectrum disorder needs specialized care that may not be available to military families everywhere they are stationed; one recent grant supported research into web-based technology, such as webcams, to explore the effectiveness and applicability of these tools to treat individuals with an autism spectrum disorder, thus ensuring that appropriate treatment is available no matter where a family is stationed.

Members of Congress have traditionally supported a wide variety of programs within the CDMRP, each with its own merits. While we all recognize the challenges facing your Committee in this difficult budget climate, we urge you to continue your support for the programs within the CDMRP.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.



Sheldon Whitehouse



Tammy Baldwin



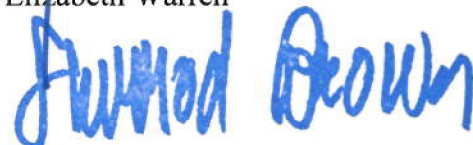
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Ron Wyden



Sherrod Brown



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Edward J. Markey

Ben Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin

Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal

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Dianne Feinstein

Bill Nelson

Bill Nelson

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Chris Van Hollen

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Al Franken

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Mazie Hirono

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Amy Klobuchar

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Jon Tester

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Heidi Heitkamp

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Tammy Duckworth

Tammy Duckworth



Christopher A. Coons



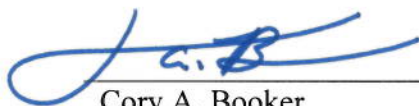
Jack Reed



Martin Heinrich



Margaret Wood Hassan



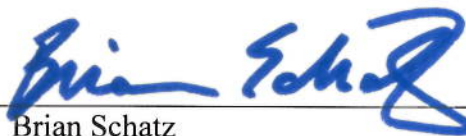
Cory A. Booker



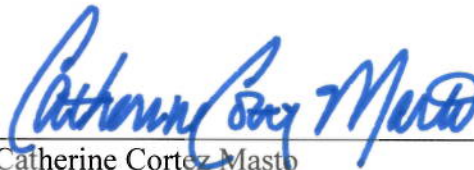
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