April 10, 2019

Senator John Boozman  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate

Senator Brian Schatz  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Schatz:

We urge the United States Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies to uphold its commitment to our nation’s veterans by providing at least $834 million in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 appropriation for the Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research program.

For more than 90 years, the VA’s Research and Development program has supported the next generation of researchers, collaborated with a wide variety of partners to leverage taxpayer investments, helped recruit and retain clinicians, and ultimately fostered excellence in veterans’ health research. Supporting the nation’s only health research program dedicated to the needs of veterans, health care innovations and discoveries through VA investments are widely acknowledged as having made successful contributions to care for veterans as well as all Americans.

Robust funding for VA Medical and Prosthetic Research will be especially important in FY 2020 to meet our veterans’ mental health challenges as suicide rates soar; to invest in new engineering and technological methods to improve the lives of veterans who have lost limbs or suffer from spinal cord injuries; to innovate health serves strategies such as telehealth; to address chronic pain amidst a nationwide opioid epidemic; and to provide for the gender-specific needs of the VA’s growing population of women veterans.

The VA also seeks to expand the use of the national, voluntary Million Veteran Program (MVP), which will ultimately constitute one of the largest genetic databases in the world, offering tremendous potential to inform research and efforts to improve health care for generations to come. To date, about 750,000 veterans have enrolled in MVP, and a number of current MVP studies have made discoveries in diseases from cancer and cardiovascular disease to Gulf War Illness and posttraumatic stress disorder.

We ask you to appropriate at least $834 million for VA Medical and Prosthetic Research for FY 2020, an amount that reflects five percent real growth over FY 2019, to continue fostering a health care system for our nation’s veterans that is innovative and effective. Such an allocation will build upon the VA’s success and allow the agency to keep pace with inflation, sustaining
existing research and development commitments while allowing innovative scientific growth to address critical emerging needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Bernard R. Sanders
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

Doug Jones
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator