

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 10, 2020

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 \$856 million in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 appropriation for the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research program.

For nearly a century, the VA's Office of Research and Development has improved the health and wellbeing of veterans around the world, identifying solutions that support the veteran population through careful, rigorous research in labs, clinics, and in communities around the country. As the nation's only health research program dedicated to the needs of veterans, these efforts have been translated into enhanced direct patient care for veterans while also making successful contributions to care for all Americans.

VA Medical and Prosthetic Research also fosters dynamic collaborations with a wide variety of partners to leverage taxpayer investments, helps recruit and retain clinicians, and ultimately fosters excellence in health research. In fact, the achievements of VA investigators – more than 60 percent of whom also provide direct patient care – have resulted in three Nobel prizes, seven Lasker awards, and numerous other national and international honors.

Robust funding for VA Medical and Prosthetic Research is especially important for FY 2021 to address a wide variety of challenges. We must invest in new engineering and technological improvements for veterans who have lost limbs or suffer from spinal cord injuries, while also tackling the invisible wounds of war by addressing mental health challenges and combatting the suicide epidemic. In addition, it is critical that the VA address the needs of growing populations: older veterans, women veterans, and veterans with chronic pain. Investing in VA Medical and Prosthetic Research also allows us to expand veterans' access to high quality clinical trials in anticipation of the needs ahead.

In addition, the VA 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. Since launching in 2011, about 825,000 veterans have enrolled in MVP, and a number of current MVP studies have made discoveries in a multitude of illnesses and

diseases, including cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, as well as conditions specific to veterans such as PTSD, TBI, and tinnitus.

We ask you to appropriate at least \$856 million for VA Medical and Prosthetic Research for FY 2021, an amount that reflects five percent real growth over FY 2020, 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.

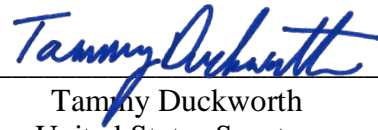
Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,



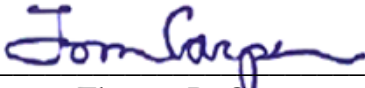
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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



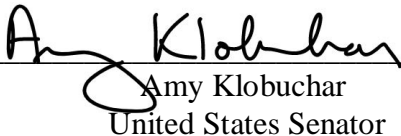
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Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



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Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



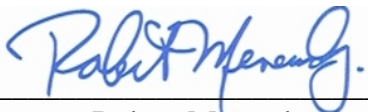
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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



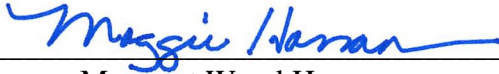
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Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



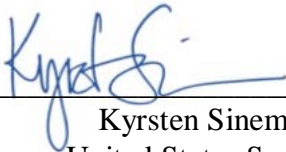
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Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



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Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



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Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



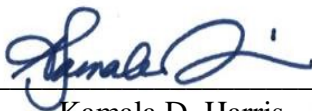
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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



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Doug Jones  
United States Senator



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Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator