May XX, 2022

Senator Martin Heinrich

Chairman

Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Military Construction,

Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

United States Senate

Senator John Boozman

Ranking Member

Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Military Construction,

Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

United States Senate

Dear Chairman Heinrich and Ranking Member Boozman:

We write requesting the United States Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies to continue increased robust support in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 appropriation for the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research Program.

The VA’s Medical and Prosthetic Research Program is the only federal research program with a specific focus on the specialized needs for our nation’s veterans. Our veterans from several different conflicts face service-connected conditions where the VA can provide insight into the care they need in an environment tailored to them. Since the program began over 95 years ago, the VA’s Medical and Prosthetic Research Program has investigated preventive measures, diagnostics, treatments, and cures for a broad spectrum of disease areas that veterans face such as mental health and substance use disorders, cancers, and spinal cord injury. Every year, funding for the VA research program supports thousands of studies at VA medical centers across the country. In 2021 alone, some of the VA breakthroughs include: identifying a new drug that could prevent Alzheimer’s disease, new treatments for breast cancer, and new therapies to heal traumatic brain injuries.

VA researchers have also continued to focus on the most pressing needs affecting veterans including during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the world grappled with the novel virus, VA researchers became a part of the nationwide efforts, including Operation Warpspeed, to combat COVID-19 and ensure veterans had access to cutting edge care. Their COVID-19 research is ongoing with clinical studies on the effects of Long COVID as the scientific community continues to learn about the virus to best protect public health.

Behind these advancements in healthcare for veterans are veteran researchers. Their dedication to service drives their incredible work and supporting VA’s research program supports their efforts to care for veterans, including utilizing the latest advances in science such as artificial intelligence and precision medicine. While many of VA’s research areas focus on the needs of veterans, their discoveries are applicable to civilian healthcare as well, making investments in VA medical research beneficial to all Americans.

Greater investments are also needed in VA research to continue the impressive work of VA researchers in usingthe most innovative technologies, which requires information technology (IT) systems to be able to handle large amounts of data that are generated from research studies. VA researchers also collaborate with academia and other research agencies, which requires that the VA’s IT systems to be compatible with partners’ IT systems to enhance the efficiency of these critical partnerships. Continued increases in annual funding that also accounts for inflation allows researchers to pursue the studies that will best benefit our nations’ veterans.

Many service members return from conflict with severe wounds, both visible and invisible. It is our responsibility to provide the best care to honor their sacrifices in service to our country. Increased investment in VA Medical and Prosthetic Research is the way to provide the most advanced treatments for their specific health needs and we urge the subcommittee to strongly support robust funding growth for this program in FY 2023.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,