

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 6, 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 to request that the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies supports at least \$980 million in funding for the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research Program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

The VA's Medical and Prosthetic Research Program is the only federal research program with a specific focus on the specialized needs of our nation's veterans. Our veterans face a number of service-connected conditions. The VA can provide insight into the care veterans need in an environment tailored to them. Since it began more than 95 years ago, the VA's Medical and Prosthetic Research Program has investigated preventive measures, diagnostics, treatments, and cures for a broad spectrum of conditions, such as mental health and substance use disorders, cancers, and spinal cord injury. Every year, funding for VA research supports thousands of studies at VA medical centers across the country. In 2021 alone, VA breakthroughs included 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 also have continued to focus on the most pressing needs affecting veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the world grappled with the novel virus, VA researchers became a part of nationwide efforts to combat COVID-19, including Operation Warpspeed, and ensured veterans had access to cutting-edge care. The VA's COVID-19 research is ongoing through clinical studies on the effects of Long COVID as the scientific community continues to learn about the virus.

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

Greater investments also are needed to continue the impressive work of VA researchers in using the most innovative technologies, which requires information technology (IT) systems that are able to handle the large amounts of data generated from research studies. VA researchers also collaborate with academia and other research agencies, which requires the VA's

IT systems to be compatible with its partners to enhance the efficiency of these critical partnerships. Continued increases in annual funding that account for inflation will allow 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 the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program is the best way to provide the most advanced treatments for their specific health needs. We urge the subcommittee to invest at least \$980 million in funding for this program in FY 2023.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

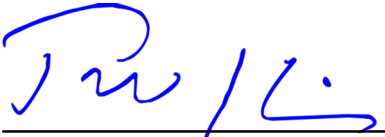
Sincerely,



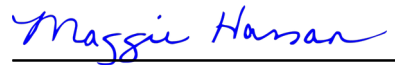
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



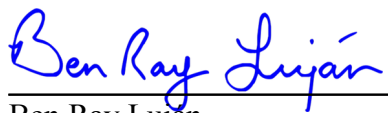
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



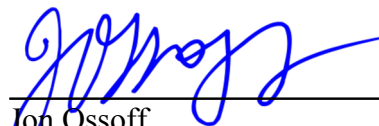
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



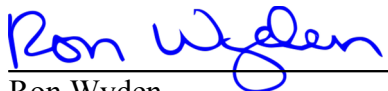
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United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator




Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



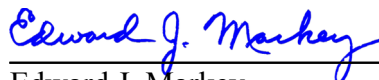
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Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



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United States Senator



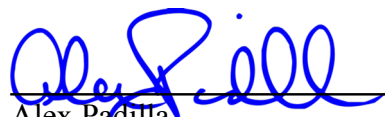
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/s/ Mark Kelly

Mark Kelly
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith

Tina Smith
United States Senator