

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2017

Senator Jerry Moran
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 Moran and Ranking Member Schatz:

We strongly urge the United States Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Relations Agencies to uphold its commitment to our nation's veterans by providing at least \$722 million in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 appropriation for Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research.

VA Medical and Prosthetic Research fosters excellence in research and patient care, and its unique model allows the VA to cultivate relationships with and draw on expertise from diverse institutions to develop high-quality VA researchers and recruit skilled clinical staff. In addition, the VA's ability to establish nationwide partnerships allows it to leverage federal investments, spending limited dollars wisely and in areas of the greatest potential impact. Most importantly, VA research and development initiatives help our veterans as they seek the care and services they deserve when they return to civilian life.

As the number of veterans utilizing services from the VA continues to dramatically increase, robust funding for VA Medical and Prosthetic Research will help expand research both on the emerging conditions of new veterans and the chronic conditions of aging veterans. In addition, funding will help the VA support areas that remain critically underfunded, including in meeting mental health concerns, addressing gender-specific needs for the growing population of women veterans, and engineering methods to improve the lives of veterans who have lost limbs or suffer from spinal cord injuries. VA research is also uniquely positioned to advance genomic medicine through the Million Veteran Program (MVP), which seeks to collect genetic samples and general health information from veterans for further study. As of 2016, the VA is halfway toward its goal of reaching one million veterans.

VA research and development programs have a history of ground-breaking innovations that have contributed to the welfare of nations and civilians alike since their inception nearly a century ago. Past VA research projects have resulted in the invention of the first implantable cardiac pacemaker, the first successful liver transplant, the development of the nicotine patch, the development of the shingles vaccine, the invention of the prosthetic "DeKA Arm," and countless other innovations. In addition, VA research program initiatives have sponsored three Nobel laureates and six recipients of the prestigious Lasker Award for major advances in the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure, or prevention of human disease.

Given this record of success, we ask you to include at least \$722 million for VA Medical and Prosthetic Research in your FY 2018 bill, an amount that reflects five percent real growth over FY 2017. Such an allocation will help the VA keep pace with inflation, sustain existing research and development commitments, and allow critical new initiatives to move forward.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator




Al Franken
United States Senator





Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

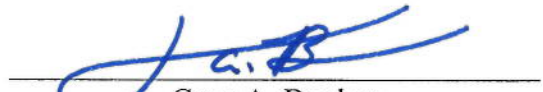



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator


Ron Wyden
United States Senator


Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator


Cory A. Booker
United States Senator


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator