

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman McConnell and Ranking Member Coons:

As you consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations for the Department of Defense (DoD), we respectfully urge the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense to uphold its commitment to our nation's servicemembers by providing at least \$3.517 billion in funding for DoD-wide Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) accounts that fund medical research.

As the United States' national security apparatus work to counter foreign adversary threats, it is important to ensure we support programs that are critical to warfighter protection and readiness. Rapid and transformative innovation is critical to ensure the Military Health System has the most advanced medical capabilities available to support readiness, combat effectiveness and survivability against adversaries. As the austere conditions of future combat operations may pose new threats to servicemembers due to endemic, emerging, and engineered biothreats, arctic operational environments, delayed evacuation, prolonged casualty care on the battlefield and contested logistics, it is vital that the DoD's medical research infrastructure is funded now to prepare for those future threats.

DoD has a long history of robust research programs that support advances in prevention and treatment for a range of conditions related to battlefield trauma, traumatic brain injury, mental health, infectious diseases, rehabilitative and regenerative medicine, and cancer. While DoD's intramural laboratories and researchers study conditions that commonly afflict our servicemembers, they also contribute to the fundamental knowledge and development of new technologies that benefit the wider American public and allies across the globe. Many medical innovations that grew out of U.S. military research over the past two centuries have been widely adopted in civilian medicine, including the use of antibiotics, prophylactics, blood transfusions, and extremity trauma care. Virtually all advances in civilian trauma care in the United States can be linked back to the U.S. military, including most recently DoD research that supported the development of vaccines to response to the COVID-19 pandemic. DoD medical research also plays a vital and unique role in the broader enterprise of federally-funded medical research institutions. DoD coordinates with other federal agencies to fill gaps in research and avoid duplication, for example by focusing on groundbreaking new cures or therapies. In addition, DoD's medical research grant-making pipeline—which funds efforts in every state in the country—involves input from patient advocates and experts in an extraordinary peer-review process.

Most importantly, cutting-edge defense medical research has been proven to produce results, yielding significant returns in economic development through innovation and health care cost savings. The highly successful Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) is a critical component of DoD medical research efforts, funded at \$1.509 billion in FY 2024. CDMRP funding alone has contributed to 56 U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved treatments over the years, including 11 cancer drugs, a rapid blood test for traumatic brain injury, and more than 600 clinical trials exploring breakthrough therapies and vaccines. CDMRP also maintains an overhead rate of 5.62 percent, among the lowest of any federal research agency. CDMRP funding was reduced by 57 percent in FY 2025, with research programs for traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, epilepsy, and orthotics and prosthetics receiving zero funding.

DoD needs to modernize medical capabilities for warfighter health, readiness, and clinical care. Advances in military medicine have substantially evolved over the past 20 years to improve survivability rates following complex and polytraumatic injuries sustained by service members on the battlefield. As such, we request at least \$3.517B for DoD's RDT&E accounts that fund medical research, which would reflect five percent real growth over FY 2024. This funding would help enhance our medical capabilities and face the challenges posed by future conflicts amid rising inflation and supply chain constraints, and is critical to ensure our national security interests and essential to servicemember deploy-ability, health, and readiness.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

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