

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 12, 2026

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

The Honorable Chris Coons
Vice Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman McConnell and Vice Chairman Coons:

As you consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 appropriations for the Department of Defense (DOD), we respectfully urge the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense to uphold its commitment to our nation's service members by providing at least \$3.517 billion in funding for DOD-wide Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) accounts that fund medical research.

The DOD's medical research efforts support innovative and life-saving interventions that protect warfighters and advance public health for service members and civilians alike. 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 near-peer adversaries. Sufficient resources for medical research and development activities are necessary to support service member health and readiness and to counter the challenges and emerging threats posed in future conflicts, such as novel weapon systems, dispersed operations, lack of air supremacy, and unprecedented high casualty rates. The austere conditions of future combat operations may pose new threats to service members due to endemic, emerging, and engineered biothreats, arctic climates, prolonged casualty evacuation, and contested logistics. It is vital that the DOD's medical research infrastructure is funded now. Estimates indicate that there will be tens of thousands of preventable warfighter deaths at the beginning of the next large-scale combat operation unless readiness is improved through investments in military medicine.

These investments also support military medical innovation that brings lasting change to the civilian health care system and to the American public. The DOD's intramural laboratories and researchers study conditions that commonly afflict our service members and develop new technologies that benefit American civilians as well as allied nations. Many medical innovations born out of U.S. military research over the past two centuries have been widely adopted in civilian medicine, including the use of antibiotics, blood transfusions, and extremity trauma care. Virtually all advances in civilian trauma care in the U.S. can be linked back to the U.S. military. In times of crisis, the United States—and the world—rely on DOD medical research, public health, and logistics capabilities to support diagnostic, therapeutic and vaccine development, and distribution.

Yet, DOD medical research programs have seen devastating cuts in the past two fiscal years after more than a decade of growth. For example, Defense Health Program's (DHP) RDT&E funding was cut 30 percent in the FY 2025 Continuing Resolution. Most notably, the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP), which funds high-impact, innovative research by focusing on gaps in research not typically coverage by other federal agencies, was cut by 57 percent in FY 2025. While your subcommittee has worked hard to restore funding lost in FY 2025, even with the increases achieved in FY 2026, defense medical research remains flat when compared to its funding 13 years ago. Meanwhile, inflation has risen almost 40 percent, and the overall DOD budget has grown more than that.

As the U.S. national security apparatus works to counter threats from foreign adversaries, such drastic decreases in these accounts are detrimental to critical warfighter protection and readiness. Such a precipitous decrease in medical RDT&E funding sets our readiness efforts back significantly. If we do not properly resource DOD, we will repeat a familiar pattern. We must provide the necessary support to preserve and protect the most valuable component of our military: American service members.

In order to save service member lives and advance biomedical research across a range of conditions, we respectfully request at least \$3.517B for DOD's RDT&E accounts that fund medical research, including at least \$1.62B for CDMRP and robust investments. This funding would help enhance DOD medical capabilities and prepare us for challenges posed by future conflicts. Amid rising inflation and supply chain constraints this funding 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.

Sincerely,

[[SIGNATURES]]