

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 4, 2024

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Defense
2256 Rayburn House Office Building

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Defense
2205 Rayburn House Office Building

Dear Chair Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you begin the development of the final fiscal year (FY) 2025 Defense Appropriations Act in coordination with the Senate, we respectfully request increased funding for the Department of Defense's Parkinson's Research Program (PRP), funded through the Defense Health Program and administered by the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP).

While we were pleased to see the program's inclusion in the House's version of the FY 2025 Defense Appropriations Act, additional funding is necessary to continue properly supporting innovative new research that addresses the growing evidence linking exposures during military service with Parkinson's Disease (PD) and the increasing number of veterans with the disease. Funding for the PRP has remained flat for the last decade, and, in recent years, the program has received four to six times the number of applications it can fund. This year, an expansion in the program's focus areas, which includes the additional study of PD motor symptoms, has increased interest in the PRP and the need for additional research support funding. In response to this expansion, CDMRP has indicated that they are anticipating over 100 applications for their FY 2024 solicitation, with recent years' solicitations receiving between 60 and 70 applications annually.


The PRP program is the only forward-looking federal research program that aims to understand PD and its service-related causes to prevent or delay the onset of symptoms and advance new treatments for servicemembers, veterans, their families, and the general public. PD impacts approximately 1 million people in the United States, including 110,000 veterans. Military service members are exposed to unique toxins and other external stressors, such as traumatic brain injury (TBI), burn pits, and various herbicides and pesticides that researchers have correlated to PD. As a result, the Department of Veterans Affairs has recognized the link between some service-related exposures and stressors, such as traumatic brain injury and exposure to certain herbicides, and the onset of Parkinson's. While researchers have made tremendous strides towards understanding the risk factors related to PD, additional funding is needed to align with the rising cost of research, match enhanced disease burden, and ensure important scientific progress continues for our nation's servicemembers, veterans, and the American public.

Research funded by the PRP has supported discoveries in head injury biomarkers, advanced knowledge of the biochemical basis of service member depression, and provided a greater understanding of neurodegenerative disease risk because of military service. While this work is critical to the care of future generations of military personnel, it also has potentially lifesaving applications for the general population. Several PRP-funded studies, such as the PARS study, which evaluated individuals for early signs of Parkinson's disease, provide the basis for important research on biomarkers that continues today. Last year, the PD community experienced an extraordinary breakthrough – the discovery of a long-sought biomarker that holds the promise of better treatments, earlier diagnosis, and ultimately, prevention of the disease. Researchers are

now working urgently to push this science forward, which, assisted by the work of the PRP, can usher in a transformation of new therapeutic development.

The PRP has and will continue to support innovative new research that leads to the development of new methods and technologies that will support advanced PD treatments for years to come. In the face of the program's flat funding, its increased interest from researchers, and rising costs of conducting research, we urge your continued and additional funding support in FY 2025 for this innovative program that will benefit warfighters, veterans, and the American public.

Sincerely,



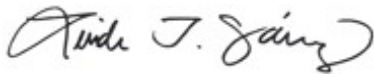
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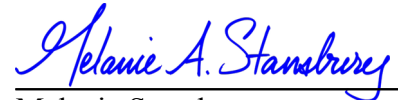
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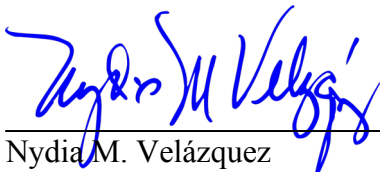
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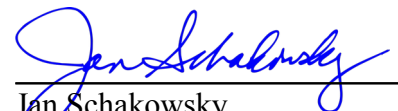
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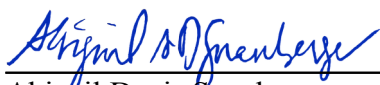
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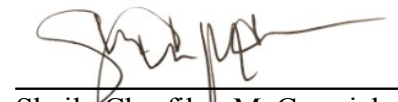
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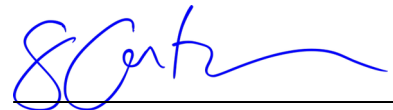
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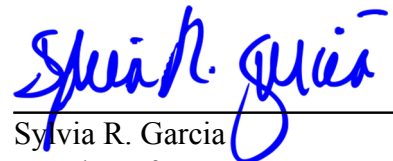
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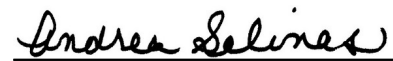
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