

December 1, 2020

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies

The Honorable John Carter
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, and Ranking Member Carter:

We appreciate your collective support of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) research program. These programs are improving the care of older Veterans across the United States. On behalf of the American Geriatrics Society (AGS), we are writing to restate our support for increased fiscal year (FY) 2021 funding for Medical and Prosthetic Research Program within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The AGS is a national non-profit organization comprised of nearly 6,000 geriatrics healthcare professionals and basic and clinical researchers specializing in aging. Many of our members work within the VA healthcare system, serving in a variety of roles to advise VA leadership on the unique needs of older, medically complex Veterans. These roles include leading the demonstration of new care models; performing cutting-edge research; and training the VA workforce to provide the highest standard of care for older Veterans and their families.

As a member of Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA)—a diverse coalition representing national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations—**the AGS urges you to adopt the House-passed FY 2021 appropriation of \$840 million for the Department of VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program.** This funding level would allow for meaningful growth above inflation and continued investment in groundbreaking research initiatives, while also allowing VA research to support improving the health of Veterans and all Americans.

Sustained and enhanced federal investment in VA research is essential to delivering high-quality, coordinated, and efficient care to our nation's growing population of older Veterans. As of 2018, nearly 50.1 percent of the 18 million Veterans in the U.S. were 65 or older¹, and more than 1.6 million were over the age of 85² – including over 450,000 surviving World War II Veterans and increasing numbers of

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=veterans&hidePreview=true&table=S2101&tid=ACSST1Y2018.S2101&t=Veterans&lastDisplayedRow=15#>. Accessed April 29, 2020

² National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Retrieved from https://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp. Updated November 8, 2019. Accessed April 29, 2020.

Korean and Vietnam Veterans.³ The VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program aims to improve the health of our Veterans and to lay the foundation for improved care within the VA – the largest managed healthcare system in our nation.

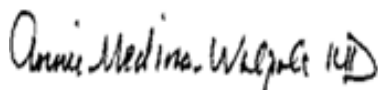
The VA Medical and Prosthetic Research program funds nearly 2,000 high-priority research projects. This work expands knowledge in areas critical to Veterans' healthcare needs, most notably for enhanced understanding of mental illness, aging, health services delivery, cancer, and heart disease. VA researchers continue to provide benefits to Veterans and all Americans. Today, VA researchers are on the cutting-edge of research on Alzheimer's disease; diabetes; exercise in the older adults; prosthetic limb use; safety and quality improvement for healthcare settings; management and rehabilitation from stroke and traumatic brain injury; end-of-life care models; osteoporosis and osteoarthritis diagnosis, management, and prevention; and the use of electronic technology for telemedicine, telemonitoring, and tele-education.

The Veterans Health Administration is the nation's largest provider of graduate medical education and plays a critical role in nurturing health scientists across their careers. In order to recruit and retain talented researchers, sufficient funding is needed to support the promising and often groundbreaking research undertaken by new investigators and the aging research facilities utilized by researchers. Support also helps sustain important work and mentoring conducted by those with long-standing experience in the field of aging research.

We are concerned that without adequate appropriations, the VA not only could fall behind in its role as a major contributor to medical and scientific research, but also be unable to meet its statutory mission of training a new generation of investigators to serve the needs of Veterans and the nation. Congress must ensure that we can properly care for Veterans and ensure they can thrive long after their service to our country.

Thank you for your consideration of our funding request for VA research. If you have comments or questions about this request or other issues related to the well-being and healthy aging of older Veterans, please contact Anna Kim, Manager of Public Affairs & Advocacy, at 212-308-1414 or akim@americangeriatrics.org.

Sincerely,



Annette Medina-Walpole, MD, AGSF
President



Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA
Chief Executive Officer

³ Ibid.

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The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Boozman, and Ranking Member Schatz:

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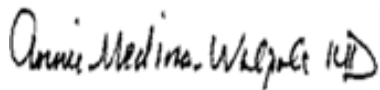
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