April 1, 2019

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert:

A landmark new study by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (Society) recently confirmed that nearly one million Americans live with multiple sclerosis (MS).¹ On behalf of those living with MS, we would like to thank you for your past support funding MS research through the Multiple Sclerosis Research Program (MSRP) at the Department of Defense. Based on this new prevalence data, we urge that Congress provide at least $16 million for the MSRP in fiscal year (FY) 2020 to help drive the development of new solutions for people with MS and target a cure for this disease.

MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body. Symptoms range from numbness and tingling to blindness and paralysis, but the progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted. Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50, during the prime of an individual’s life, with at least two to three times more women than men being diagnosed with the disease. There currently is no cure, but investment in research will drive solutions that will bring us closer to a world free of MS.

The new prevalence information indicates that nearly 70,000 American veterans live with MS. An advisory committee commissioned by the VA has recommended further study into the potential link between combat service and increases risk of developing MS and Congress must ensure that this research can be funded. Only 30%-40% of veterans receive obtain their care

from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA); however, the VHA provides care for 20,000 veterans with MS annually. Of those veterans that do receive care at the VHA, over half have a service connected disability for MS. Answering basic biological gaps and fundamental questions about MS has the potential to significantly improve readiness for our armed service members as well as improving outcome and care for all of those living with MS.

The high risk, high reward nature of research funded by the MSRP can transform general knowledge and understanding of MS, improve diagnosis and care, and help find a cure. This knowledge can improve the readiness of our active duty service members and help guide treatment of veterans and the American public. To meet these goals, we ask that you provide $16 million for the MSRP in the FY2020 Defense Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Harley Rouda  
Member of Congress
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Glenn "GT" Thompson
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Glenn "GT" Thompson
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress
Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress

Peter T. King
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress
Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

Sean P. Duffy  
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress

Bill Posey  
Member of Congress

Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress
J. R. Himes
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Sean P. Duffy
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

Bill Posey
Member of Congress

Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui
Member of Congress
Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Mike Levin  
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

Abby Finkenauer  
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

Cedric L. Richmond  
Member of Congress

Jared Golden  
Member of Congress
Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

Dan Kildee
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress