Support Defense Funding for Melanoma Research in FY2021

*FY20 Sign-ons: Stauber, Finkenauer, Desaulnier, Casten, Wild, Gabbard, Beyer, Wexton, Neguse, Crow, Spanberger, Slotkin, Rouda, Garamendi, DeFazio, Norton, Johnson (GA), DeLauro, Sherman*

Dear Colleague,

Please join me on a letter to the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee supporting $35 million for the Melanoma Research Program in the FY21 Defense Appropriations bill. This program is funded within the Defense Health account.

Melanoma is a unique and major threat to our military community, who continue with their missions in environments of extreme solar radiation. Decades of studies from the time of WWII to the current generation of war fighters confirm the linkage of exposure to the development of deadly melanoma. A 2014 Military Medicine Study found that the overall incidence rate for melanoma in active duty military personnel between 2000 and 2007 was 62% greater than the general population during the same period.

Continued innovation in melanoma prevention, detection and treatment is only possible with continued investment in high quality research. That is why we are asking for an increase over the FY20 funding level for the MRP. There is a demonstrated need for additional research dollars; only 17 out of 163 competitive research proposals were approved in FY2019 due to lack of funding, despite many more earning an excellent rating. For context, this is a 10% approval rate; in 2018 the NIH had a research approval rate of 20%.

The full text of the letter is below. If you have any questions or would like to sign on, please have your staff contact Danielle Sumner in Rep. Maloney’s office at Danielle.Sumner@mail.house.gov (5-7944). The letter will be open for signatures until the end of the day on Friday, March 13, 2020.

Sincerely,

**CAROLYN B. MALONEY**

**Member of Congress**

March 17, 2020

Chairman Peter Visclosky Ranking Member Ken Calvert

House Appropriations Committee House Appropriations Committee

Subcommittee on Defense Subcommittee on Defense

H-405 Capitol H-405 Capitol

Washington, DC 20515 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert:

We write to thank the Committee for creating a separate line item for Defense-funded melanoma research in the Fiscal Year 2020 Defense Appropriations bill and respectfully request that the Committee provide $35 million for melanoma research in the Fiscal Year 2021 Defense Appropriations bill. This program is funded within the Defense Health account.

Melanoma is a unique and major threat to our military community, who carry out their missions in environments of extreme solar radiation. Decades of studies from WWII to the current generation of war fighters confirm the linkage of this exposure to the development of deadly melanoma. Continued innovation in melanoma prevention, detection, and treatment is only possible with continued investment in high quality research.

A 2000 "Annals of Epidemiology" study comparing mortality among WWII veterans of the Pacific and European Theaters found that Pacific Theater Prisoner of War veterans had an estimated 3 times greater risk of dying from melanoma than veterans of the European Theater.[[1]](#footnote-1) The article concluded that these data are "consistent with the hypothesis that exposure to high levels of solar radiation in young adulthood is associated with a higher risk of melanoma mortality.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

According to *The Pulse*, the online source for the Uniformed Services University, “melanoma is the most significant cancer to affect the active duty military population.”[[3]](#footnote-3) A Vanderbilt School of Medicine study cites that only 22 percent of military personnel were made aware of the risks of sun exposure, 77 percent reported being exposed to bright sunlight for more than 4 hours a day, and only 27 percent had regular access to sunscreen.[[4]](#footnote-4) The study concluded that “the past decade of United States’ combat missions, including operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, have occurred at a more equatorial latitude than the mean center of the United States population, increasing the potential for ultraviolent irradiance and the development of skin cancer.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Recent studies have borne out these conclusions. A study published in the Military Service Monthly Report found that in a 10-year surveillance period from 2005 to 2014, malignant melanoma was one of the most frequent cancer diagnoses among male service members, and the second most frequent cancer diagnosis among female service members.[[6]](#footnote-6) Another 2014 Military Medicine Study found that the overall incidence rate of melanoma in active duty military personnel between 2000 and 2007 was 62 percent greater than among the general population during the same period.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Given the clear threat melanoma poses to our service members, and the volume of high-quality research proposals, we respectfully request that the committee provide $35 million for melanoma research in the Fiscal Year 2021 Defense Appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

1. Page, William F., David Whiteman, and Michael Murphy. "A comparison of melanoma mortality among WWII veterans of the Pacific and European theaters." Annals of epidemiology 10, no. 3 (2000): 192-195. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mason, V. (2018). Improving the Detection of Melanoma in Active Duty Military. [online] The Pulse. Available at: https://usupulse.blogspot.com/2018/02/improving-detection-of-melanoma-in.html [Accessed 26 Feb. 2020]. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Powers JG, Patel NA, Powers EM, Mayer JE, Stricklin GP, Geller AC. Skin cancer risk factors and preventative behaviors among United States military veterans deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan [published online ahead of print June 25, 2015]. J Invest Dermatol. doi: 10.1038/jid.2015.238. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lee, T., V. F. Williams, and L. L. Clark. "Incident diagnoses of cancers in the active component and cancer-related deaths in the active and reserve components, US Armed Forces, 2005-2014." MSMR 23, no. 7 (2016): 23-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Lea, C. Suzanne, Jimmy T. Efird, Amanda E. Toland, Denise R. Lewis, and Christopher J. Phillips. "Melanoma incidence rates in active duty military personnel compared with a population-based registry in the United States, 2000–2007." (2014): 247-253. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)