

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Appropriations Committee
122 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Appropriations Committee
122 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 201510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Durbin:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2019 Department of Defense Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you include \$10 million in funding under Army Research, Development, Test and Evaluation for the Military Burn Trauma Research Program.

Since FY 2007, Congress has included funding to support multi-center clinical trials to improve care for those members of the armed forces suffering from serious burn injuries during the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. We were pleased that the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations bill continued this commitment by including funding for this competitive, peer-reviewed program. Previous funding under this program has helped establish the infrastructure, education, and leadership to support rigorous multicenter clinical trials on burn outcomes at hospitals across the nation and foster collaboration among military and civilian burn surgeons and researchers. We strongly believe that continued funding for military burn research is critical to ensuring that we are providing the best possible care to our wounded service members.

As you know, burns are one of the most painful and devastating battlefield injuries. According to the Department of Defense, nearly 1,000 service men and women have suffered significant burn injuries since the start of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Due to improvements in combat casualty care, today 95 percent of service members survive burn injuries—many of which may have been fatal only a few years ago. However, burn survivors must often cope with severe physical injuries, incapacitating scarring, and limitations in function and movement. For the non-survivors, approximately 86 percent of all battlefield deaths occur within the first 30 minutes after wounding, emphasizing the importance of rapidly diagnosing and rendering appropriate initial burn resuscitation and treatment.

Military burn research has made tremendous strides in improving outcomes for service members who sustain burn injuries. For example, ongoing studies underway at 42 burn centers across the nation are looking at ways to maximize function through rehabilitation, determine what methods are most effective at preventing scar contracture, improve triage within the first 30 minutes to ensure survival of the injured soldier, identify better methods to assess and treat infection, define best use of blood transfusion in burn care and identify the effect of combined burn and traumatic brain injury in outcomes. Ongoing military burn research is also contributing to treatment of acute lung injury due to smoke inhalation and burns.

As findings from these studies can be directly translated to the civilian population, the impact of this program reaches far beyond the military, improving care and treatment for the thousands in the United States and around the globe who suffer acute burn injuries each year.

Important advances have been made in military burn research to date, but there are still many unmet research needs that must be addressed to continue improving care for our service men and women. High priority areas that require additional study include optimal pain management, wound healing, decreasing the incidence of life-threatening blood clots, and the use of advanced technologies including telemedicine for both evaluation of and long-term care for the acutely wounded soldier.

With so many projects in need of funding, it is critical that every effort should be made to utilize existing burn research administrative infrastructure to reduce indirect costs and maximize the funds available for military burn research.

We understand that our nation faces difficult budget choices and that there are many priorities you must consider, but we believe the brave men and women that defend our nation deserve the best possible care we can provide—including treatment and care for burn injuries. As such, we urge you to continue robust funding for military burn research in fiscal year 2019.

Again, we appreciate your leadership on this issue and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



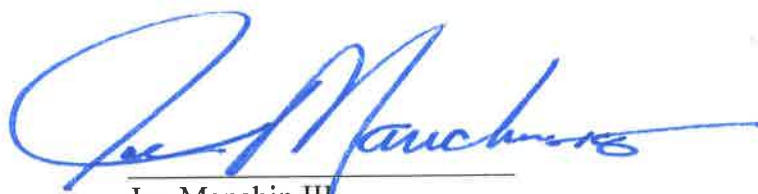
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



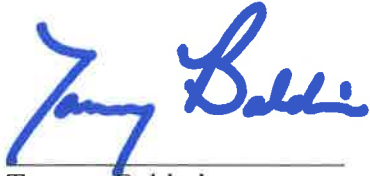
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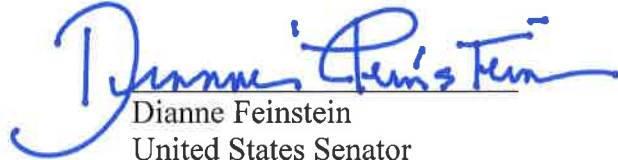
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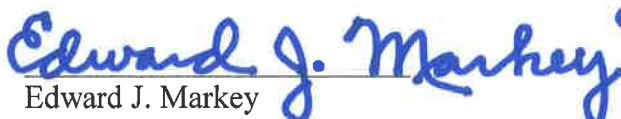
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