

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 1, 2026

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Defense
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Coons
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Defense
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair McConnell and Ranking Member Coons,

As you begin work on the fiscal year 2027 (FY27) Defense Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you continue to include Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) as an eligible research topic area for the Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP), a part of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP).

Although the exact causes of ME/CFS remain unknown, research suggests that symptoms can be triggered by extreme systemic injury, viral infections, and environmental exposures—conditions that active-duty servicemembers are disproportionately likely to encounter. Additionally, veterans of the Gulf War are shown to have disproportionately high levels of ME/CFS.¹ The connection between ME/CFS and service-related exposures underscores the urgent need for dedicated research funding to better understand and address this disabling condition among military personnel and veterans.²

ME/CFS is a severe and debilitating disease that affects an estimated 1.3% of U.S. adults, with a significant portion unable to maintain employment due to debilitating symptoms.³ Individuals with ME/CFS face significant disability, with 25% homebound or bedbound, often for life.⁴ The financial and social costs—including medical expenses, lost income, disability benefits, and caretaker burdens—are profound, with broader implications for military readiness, veterans, and their families.

We are grateful for your past inclusion of ME/CFS as a PRMRP Congressionally Directed Topic Area. Ensuring its continued inclusion in the PRMRP will help advance critical research into the causes, treatments, and potential interventions for this debilitating condition. It is essential that our nation invests

¹ McCauley, L. A., Joos, S. K., Barkhuizen, A., Shuell, T., Tyree, W. A., & Bourdette, D. N., Chronic fatigue in a population-based study of Gulf War veterans. *Archives of Environmental Health*, 57(4), 340–348 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00039890209601419>.

² Halpin, P., Williams, M. V., Klimas, N. G., Fletcher, M. A., Barnes, Z., & Ariza, M. E., Myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome and Gulf War illness patients exhibit increased humoral responses to the herpesviruses-encoded dUTPase: Implications in disease pathophysiology. *Journal of Medical Virology*, 89(9), 1636–1645 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmv.24810>.

³ Vahratian, A., Lin, S., Bertolli, J., & Unger, E. R., Myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome in adults: United States, 2021–2022. NCHS Data Brief, no 488 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.15620/cdc:134504>.

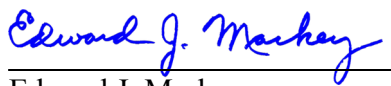
⁴ Pinero De Plaza, M. A., Beleigoli, A., Kitson, A., McMillan, P., & Barrera Causil, C. J., Piloting a big data epidemiology approach to support frail, homebound, and bedridden people. *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 310, 1292–1296 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3233/SHTI231173>.

in research to better understand and mitigate the impact of ME/CFS on affected individuals, including our servicemembers and veterans.

We also wanted to highlight the importance of robust funding to the CDMRP in FY27 as an issue that is of critical importance to ME/CFS long term research success, along with the 43 other illnesses included in the PRMRP.

We appreciate your leadership and your continued commitment to addressing these pressing health concerns. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

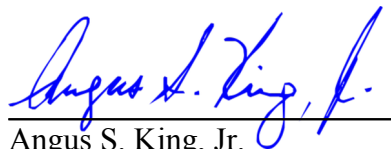
Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



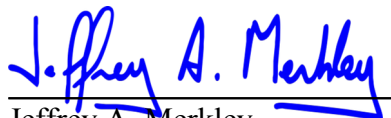
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



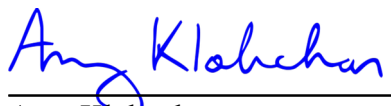
Tina Smith
United States Senator



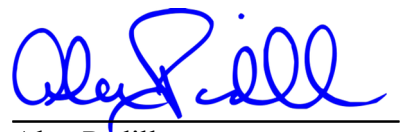
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



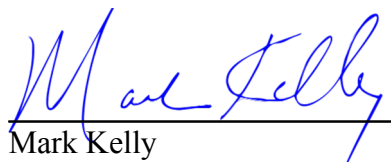
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United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator

