

December 9, 2022

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chair
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
412 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Tester and Ranking Member Moran:

Thank you for your leadership in supporting our nation's veterans, and the veteran-centric research taking place at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). To further this work of translating veteran-centric research into improved health outcomes, the nearly 90 undersigned organizations representing academic, medical, and scientific societies; health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations urge you to work to pass the House-passed VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research Act of 2021, or VIPER Act (H.R. 5721) by the end of this calendar year.

The VIPER Act would provide added authority and resources to improve the functionality and efficiency of the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research program, including formally authorizing VA's Office of Research and Development. Importantly, the VIPER Act would allow critical research affiliations between VA medical centers and specific partner organizations to continue without disruption. Earlier this year, the VA issued guidance that prohibits VA employees involved in VA research from receiving compensation from outside sources, including a VA-affiliated Nonprofit Education and Research Corporations or an affiliated nonprofit medical school. This policy will be highly disruptive to thousands of research projects focused on improving veterans' health led by VA scientists, many of whom have joint appointments with nonprofit medical schools. Sec. 3 of the VIPER Act would provide the needed exemption to allow outside compensation for VA researchers and the stability for the continuity of these important research projects that have the ability to improve the health not only of our veterans, but all Americans.

In addition, the VIPER Act would better align the VA research program with other federal research agencies through a waiver of Paperwork Reduction Act requirements. Further, the bill would support the VA research program in keeping pace with cutting edge technology through the expansion of hiring authorities for additional research occupations to enhance the diversity of the VA research workforce, increase scientific opportunities, and lead to improved health care for veterans.

In order to best support the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research program, we urge your swift action to pass the VIPER Act this Congress to increase the breadth of research opportunities and avoid harmful disruptions and potentially premature terminations of research studies. We are pleased that Congress has worked over the last several years in a bipartisan, bicameral manner to support robust funding growth for VA research, and passage of the VIPER Act is critical to enhance the research program's return on Congress's investment.

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Sincerely,

86 Organizations as of Dec. 9

Albert Einstein College of Medicine
American Academy of Neurology
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Directors of Psychiatric Residency Training
American Association of the Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Brain Coalition
American College of Physicians
American Dental Education Association
American Gastroenterological Association
American Headache Society
American Heart Association
American Liver Foundation
American Migraine Foundation
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association Services
American Society of Nephrology
American Thoracic Society
American Tinnitus Association
American Urological Association
Arthritis Foundation
Associated Medical Schools of New York
Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
Association of Academic Physiatrists
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of University Anesthesiologists
Association of University Professors of Neurology
Association of VA Psychologist Leaders (AVAPL)
Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist
Baylor College of Medicine
Blinded Veterans Association
Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine
BRAVO VICTOR
Catholic War Veterans and Auxiliary of the USA Inc.
Catholic War Veterans of the USA
Columbia University Irving Medical Center
Dartmouth Geisel School of Medicine
Digestive Disease National Coalition
Disabled American Veterans
Duke Health
Emory University
Endocrine Society
Executive Board of the Coalition for the Advancement and Application of Psychological Science
(CAAPS)
Harvard University

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Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine
Medical College of Wisconsin
Melanoma Research Foundation
Military and Veterans Committee, Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry
National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists
National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations (NAVREF)
National Ataxia Foundation
National MS Society
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA)
NYU Langone Health
Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Patrick Risha CTE Awareness Foundation
Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania Health System
Project Sleep
Prostate Cancer Foundation
Sleep Research Society
Society for Neuroscience
Society for Research in Psychopathology
Society of Academic Associations of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine (SAAAPM)
Society of General Internal Medicine
Stanford University
The George Washington University
Tulane University School of Medicine
UMass Chan Medical School
University of Nebraska Medical Center
University of Arizona
University of Hawai'i at Manoa John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Iowa Health Care
University of Maryland, Baltimore
University of Mississippi Medical Center
University of Rochester
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center
Vanderbilt University Medical Center
Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute
Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Yale University

cc:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Mark Takano, Chair, U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Honorable Mike Bost, Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs