

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2026

The Honorable Kenneth Calvert  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you begin deliberations on the Fiscal Year 2027 Defense Appropriations bill, we wanted to thank you for protecting the Department of Defense (DoD) Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program (PRCRP) for Fiscal Year 2026 and for increasing funding for the program. We respectfully request that you continue to include esophageal cancer as a disease eligible for research funding in the PRCRP, as you have done since FY 2020.

Esophageal cancer is the seventh leading cause of cancer-related death among American men. In addition, about four out of five patients (nearly 80 percent) die within five years of receiving an esophageal cancer diagnosis, and almost 50 percent die within the first year. It is one of America's deadliest cancers, largely because effective treatment is rare, early detection is scarce, and no screening guidelines exist for this disease.

Further, many of those at greatest risk for esophageal cancer are men over the age of 55 who have a history of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), tobacco and/or alcohol use, and/or obesity – all risks that are higher among our nation's veterans compared to the general population. Of increased concern, recent research shows that the incidence of esophageal adenocarcinoma, the most prevalent form of this cancer in the U.S., has doubled among younger patients in the last few decades. That means our warfighters and their families are also at increased risk, and the studies show that these patients typically present with late-stage disease when treatment is rarely successful.


Our military personnel and veterans also have additional risks. The VA has already established that there is a presumption of service connection for esophageal cancer due to radiation and burn pit exposure. There is also a link to the contaminated drinking water at U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina from the 1950s through the 1980s. Veterans and their families who were stationed there may have been exposed to drinking water contaminated with industrial solvents, benzene, and other chemicals that have been linked to esophageal cancer.


We greatly appreciate that you have included esophageal cancer in the PRCRP for the last seven years. Given the lack of early detection tools and effective treatments and the impact this disease has on our Armed Services and Veteran populations, it is critical that esophageal cancer continues to be included in the PRCRP. A hallmark of the PRCRP is its focus on high-risk, high-reward research, making it inherently different than the approach used by the National Cancer Institute. By continuing to include esophageal cancer as a disease eligible for funding under the PRCRP, Congress will be giving all American men and women at risk for and diagnosed with esophageal cancer a fighting chance for survival and a new hope for the future.

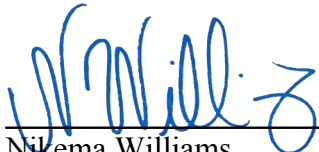
Congress established the PRCRP in FY 2009 to support research into specifically designated cancers with relevance to military service members and their families. Esophageal cancer clearly meets those criteria, particularly given the burden that it has and is projected to have on the military and veteran population and the fact that the VA and Congress have already recognized links between military service and esophageal cancer.

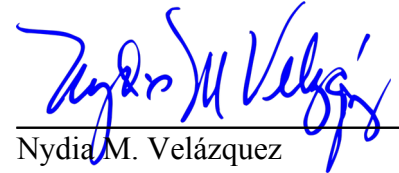
We respectfully request your support for maintaining eligibility for esophageal cancer research funding through the PRCRP and for continuing to grow the federal investment in the program. With your support, we will open new avenues of research to stop the devastation caused by this disease in both our military and civilian populations.


Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Barry Loudermilk  
Member of Congress


  
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Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress


  
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Brian K. Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

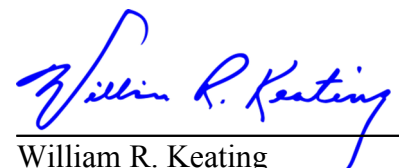
  
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Andrew R. Garbarino  
Member of Congress

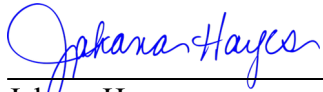
  
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Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

  
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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress

  
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Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress

  
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

  
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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



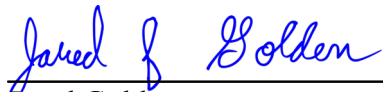
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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



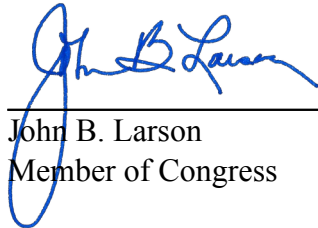
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



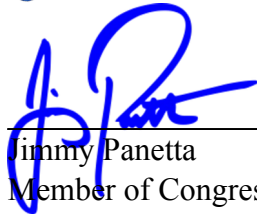
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Jared Golden  
Member of Congress



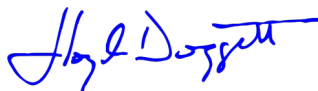
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John B. Larson  
Member of Congress



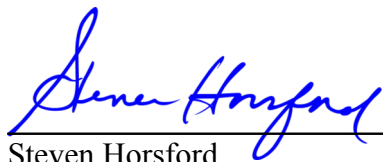
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Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



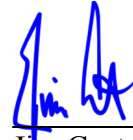
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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



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Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress



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Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



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Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



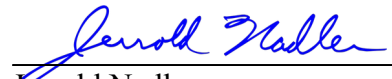
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Bill Foster  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



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Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



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Angie Craig  
Member of Congress



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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



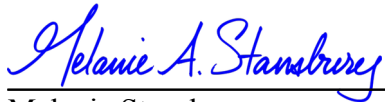
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Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress



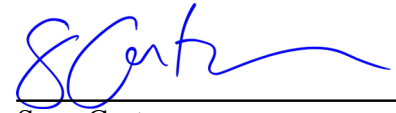
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James R. Walkinshaw  
Member of Congress



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Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



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Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



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Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Derek Schmidt  
Member of Congress



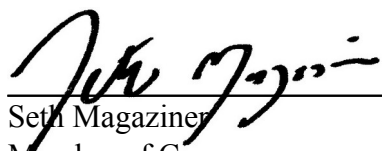
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Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress



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Jefferson Van Drew  
Member of Congress



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Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress