April 2, 2024

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Calvert and Tester and Ranking Members McCollum and Collins:

We are writing in support of an appropriation of $14 million for Military Dental Research in the FY 2025 Defense Appropriations bill within the Navy Research, Development, Test and Evaluation budget line **(R-1: line 131 PE: 0604771N)**. This amount is $2 million above the FY 2024 enacted funding level. The additional funding would help develop and advance research to address head and facial injuries suffered in the field.

Military Dental Research (MDR) focuses on reconstructing and restoring function of craniofacial (face and skull) tissues and structures. The research is unique and not duplicated by any other Federal dental program. In fact, it is the only program focused on head and facial trauma and oral disease. MDR research is conducted at the Joint Center of Excellence for Battlefield Health and Trauma (BHT) at Fort Sam Houston – San Antonio Military Medical Center.

Over 42% of injured service members have had wounds to the head and face. In the last decade alone, over 4,000 service members experienced facial injuries. These injuries cause significant physical and emotional challenges for the service member, often resulting in difficulties breathing, eating, and speaking. Military dental researchers are the only investigators conducting research to mitigate the loss of facial tissue function and restoration with high quality bone and skin for these service members.

An important aspect of repairing facial wounds is finding better methods to prevent wound complications and addressing infections that are drug resistant. For example, this includes continued research and development of drug therapy solutions to deliver acute burn care capabilities at the point

of need. Such treatments are also used for severe battle wounds to increase survivability, stabilize injuries, and limit scarring and infection when evacuation is delayed or unavailable due to limited resources. These medical advances would not only benefit wounded soldiers but could save countless American lives. Each year, antibiotic resistant bacteria infect more than 2.8 million Americans and kill at least 35,000 people[1].

Dental researchers collaborate with scientists at the nation's best universities to help advance these efforts and many more. Because of Congressional funding, the results of their work will continue to aid wounded service members and civilians who suffer head or facial injury due to trauma, burns or surgery for oral cancer.

Thank you again for considering the programmatic request. We believe that MDR is a worthy investment even in today's difficult budgetary environment to uphold our responsibility to our nation's troops and to advance research that will save American lives and reduce taxpayer costs.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Fisher with ADA at fisherj@ada.org or Yehuda Sugarman with AADOCR at ysugarman@iadr.org.

Sincerely,

American Dental Association
American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research

[1] CDC. Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States, 2019. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2019