June 1, 2016

The Honorable John McCain  The Honorable Jack Reed
United States Senator  United States Senator
Chair  Ranking Minority Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services  Senate Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20510  Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman McCain and Ranking Member Reed,

The undersigned organizations and institutions write in opposition to Sections 756 and 898 of S. 2943, the fiscal year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, which would prohibit funding for medical research at the Department of Defense (DoD) unless such research meets certain narrowly defined criteria related to military relevance. We urge you to support amendments that we expect to be offered during Senate floor consideration that would strike this language from the bill.

We oppose Section 756 because it is unnecessary and, if enacted, could jeopardize funding for research activities that have broader relevance to the U.S. military, including the health and well-being of military families and veterans, and the efficiency of the military health care system. We oppose Section 898 because it would place unnecessary and burdensome acquisition compliance and auditing requirements on programs that are already serving the taxpayer well.

The medical research programs at DoD directly impact the health and lives of the U.S. military, including combat veterans and their families. They include important medical research programs related to several forms of cancer and other disorders. Grants awarded through these programs have led to breakthroughs on nerve regeneration and traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – key developments favorably impacting our newest wounded warriors. Other programs provide groundbreaking research on psychological health, Gulf War Illness, spinal cord injury, and hearing and vision loss (which comprise a significant portion of current battlefield injuries). Many of these diseases occur at greater rates in those who have served in the military.

Defense health research grants undergo rigorous merit review from both scientific and consumer review panels, and are awarded competitively based in large part on their innovative qualities as well as scientific merit and relevance to the U.S. military.

During floor consideration of S. 2943, we urge the Senate to support amendments to strike this language from the bill and also support continued investments in the medical research programs at DoD.
Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Action to Cure Kidney Cancer
Adult Congenital Heart Association
Alliance for Lupus Research/Lupus Research Institute
ALS Association
Alzheimer's Association
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Cancer Research
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Clinical Urologists
American Brain Tumor Association
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Dental Association
American Diabetes Association
American Gastroenterological Association
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Nephrology
American Thoracic Society
American Urological Association
Aplastic Anemia and MDS International Foundation
Arthritis Foundation
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Autism Speaks
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
Cancer Support Community
Caring Together New York
Children's Heart Foundation
Children's Tumor Foundation
Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy (CURE)
Coalition for National Security Research (CNSR)
Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory
Colon Cancer Alliance
Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation of America
CureHHT
Debbie’s Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer
Digestive Disease National Coalition
Duke University
Duke University School of Medicine
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation
Endocrine Society
Esophageal Cancer Action Network, Inc.
Fight Colorectal Cancer
FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered
Foundation for Women’s Cancer
Foundation to Eradicate Duchenne
Georgetown University
GBS|CIDP Foundation International
Hartford HealthCare Center
Hepatitis Foundation International
Hydrocephalus Association
Indiana University
International Foundation for Functional GI Disorders
International Myeloma Foundation
Interstitial Cystitis Association
Johns Hopkins University
Kidney Cancer Association
LAM Foundation
Lineberger Clinic Cancer Center at the University of North Carolina
Littlest Tumor Foundation
Living Beyond Breast Cancer
Lung Cancer Alliance
Lupus Foundation of America
Lymphangiomatosis & Gorham's Disease Alliance
Lymphoma Research Foundation
Malecare Cancer Support
Melanoma Research Foundation
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research
Michigan State University
Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance
Muscular Dystrophy Association
National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research
National Association of Nurse Practitioners In Women’s Health
National Autism Association
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University of Pittsburgh  
University of Washington  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
US Hereditary Angioedema Association  
Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network  
The V Foundation for Cancer Research  
Vanderbilt University  
Veterans for Common Sense  
Veterans Health Council  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Washington State Neurofibromatosis Families  
Weill Cornell Medicine  
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease  
Young Survival Coalition  
ZERO-The End of Prostate Cancer  

cc: United States Senators  

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