The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
Defense Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
H-405, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Ranking Member
Defense Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Visclosky,

We write to respectfully request that during conference on the Fiscal 2019 Defense Appropriations bill the House agree to the Senate level of $10 million for Department of Defense-funded melanoma research.

A 2000 "Annals of Epidemiology" study comparing mortality among WWII veterans of the Pacific and European Theaters found that Pacific Theater Prisoner of War veterans had an estimated 3-fold higher risk of dying from melanoma than veterans of the European Theater. The article concluded that these data are "consistent with the hypothesis that exposure to high levels of solar radiation in young adulthood is associated with a higher risk of melanoma mortality." As many serious cases arise many years after the worst exposure, it is likely that we will see increased rates among Korean and Vietnam War veterans as well.

A 2015 study of warfighters returning from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) missions in Afghanistan and Iraq found that 84% of respondents worked in a desert climate, 77% spent 4 or more hours per day working in bright sun, and 64% spent more than 75% of their days working in the bright sun. However, only 13% of respondents reported routine sunscreen use and less than 30% had routine access to sunscreen while working. That study concluded: “The past decade of United States’ combat missions, including operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, have occurred at a more equatorial latitude than the mean center of the United States population, increasing the potential for ultraviolent irradiance and the development of skin cancer.”

According to The Pulse, the online source for the Uniformed Services University, concluded that “melanoma is the most significant cancer to affect the active duty military population.” A 2014 Military Medicine Study found that the overall incidence rate in active duty military personnel between 2000 and 2007 was 62% greater than the general population during the same period. According to the Fiscal 2015 DOD Report to Congress, a detailed analysis by the Automated Central Tumor Registry of DoD-published data also found that the incidence of melanoma was higher in the U.S. military population in comparison to the U.S. general population.

We thank you for considering this important request and would greatly appreciate that the House agree to the Senate’s $10 million line item for melanoma research in Conference on the Fiscal 2019 Defense Appropriations bill.