MRF Melanoma Research Foundation



The Advocate Newsletter – July 2026

Chair's Welcome

From the desk of Douglas Brodman, Board Chair:

The MRF celebrates the start of summer with a renewed commitment to melanoma prevention. This year, 20 states declared May Melanoma Awareness Month, signaling the importance of awareness, education and prevention. We also continued our annual tradition of participating in the American Academy of Dermatology Association's (AADA) Skin Cancer Screening on Capitol Hill, reinforcing the need for regular skin checks to members of Congress and their staff.

As is often the case, this summer has also presented opportunities for the patient voice to be heard. The Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs' (CDMRP) Melanoma Research Program is currently facing a $25 million cut from last year. I encourage you to share the importance of funding this critical Defense-funded program before the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 federal budget is passed. Continue reading on to learn more about how you can take action and urge your Senators to prioritize melanoma research in the Defense Appropriations bill.

Additionally, and perhaps encouragingly, the FDA has agreed to allow Replimune to resubmit for approval of their advanced melanoma drug, RP1. Many of you provided testimony to the FDA during their initial review of RP1 and we are deeply grateful for your advocacy. Your voices continue to have a meaningful impact and drive real progress for melanoma patients.

I wish all of you a safe and enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,

Douglas Brodman

Chair, Board of Directors

DoD Melanoma Research Program Updates

House Appropriations Committee Allocates $15 million for MRP in FY27

The House Committee on Appropriations held their full markup of the FY27 Defense Appropriations Bill at the end of June and outlined funding allocations for the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) within the Department of Defense (DoD). Unfortunately, the markup included a $25 million cut to the Melanoma Research Program (MRP), reducing the funding level to $15 million. The MRP has been funded at $40 million

since FY22 through FY26. While this cut has advanced in the House, the Senate has yet to finalize its version of the spending bill.

If passed with a $15 million allocation, this would significantly stymy the progress of research advancing melanoma prevention, early detection and treatment for active military personnel, veterans, military families and the public alike. Melanoma is a unique and urgent threat to our military community as service members are 60% more likely to receive a diagnosis than the civilian population, while aircrew personnel are 87% more likely to develop melanoma.

Continued innovation in melanoma prevention, detection and treatment is only possible with continued investment in high quality research. Take action today and urge your lawmakers to protect $40 million for the Defense-funded Melanoma Research Program within the CDMRP.

Take Action

MRF Leads Sign On Letter from Patient Advocacy Community to Congressional Leadership to Defend MRP Funding

In response to the House Committee on Appropriations including a $15 million cut to the CDMRP's Melanoma Research Program during their markup of the FY27 Defense Appropriations bill, the MRF spearheaded a sign on letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee leadership to urge for the continuation of $40 million in funding. The letter was endorsed by numerous peer organizations representing the skin cancer, patient advocacy and dermatology communities.

The MRF will continue to monitor further developments and keep our advocates informed. If you want to receive our upcoming action alerts, please sign up here.

20 States Nationwide Declare May as Melanoma Awareness Month



Every year, the MRF works in partnership with advocates nationwide to declare May as Melanoma Awareness Month in their home states. These state proclamation requests go through Governors offices and bring visibility into important issues, such as the significance of melanoma prevention and early detection. This year, the MRF advocate community successfully led efforts to recognize May as Melanoma Awareness Month across 20 different states in the US, including Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia and Wisconsin. Thank you to our advocates for their efforts to highlight the prevalence of melanoma and the critical role of sun safety!

If you would like to partner with us to submit a state proclamation request for Melanoma Awareness Month next year, please email advocacy@melanoma.org.

MRF Provides Comments to CMS on Prior Authorization for Laboratory Testing

On June 15, the MRF provided comments to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding prior authorization and laboratory testing. Many health plans deny coverage unless prior authorization is approved strictly on or before the exact date a specimen is collected. When administrative reviews lag, viable specimens must often be discarded, forcing vulnerable patients, especially those battling cancer or rare diseases, to undergo unnecessary, repeated blood draws. This delays time-sensitive treatment decisions and places disproportionate financial and geographic burdens on rural and low-income populations. To align insurance policies with real-world clinical workflows, the MRF urged CMS to mandate that health plans allow prior authorizations to be processed after specimen collection, stop denying medically necessary tests solely because paperwork was not finalized before the draw date, eliminate repeated blood draws when valid specimens are available, accelerate turnaround times for oncology diagnostics, and protect patients from surprise out-of-pocket costs when acting in good faith.

FDA Holds Advisory Committee Meeting to Reconsider RP1 Approval





On June 26, the FDA accepted the resubmission of the Biologics License Application (BLA) for RP1 (vusolimogene oderparepvec) in combination with nivolumab (Opdivo) for the treatment of advanced melanoma. As a next step in the review process, the FDA scheduled an Advisory Committee Meeting on July 30 to reconsider the approval of RP1. This will be the third time that RP1 is up for approval, restoring hope for patients with anti-PD1 refractory metastatic melanoma who do not find success with other FDA-approved therapeutics or clinical trials.

Earlier in the month, the MRF encouraged melanoma patients, caregivers and advocates to submit supporting comments and stories during the public comment period emphasizing the critical need for this approval.

Last July, the FDA decided to decline approval RP1 after having cited concerns with the study design. The MRF proudly mobilized and partnered with other leading melanoma advocacy organizations to amplify the voices of patients and caregivers most impacted.

If you are living with advanced melanoma and did not respond to or have stopped responding to current therapies, have received RP1 + nivolumab as part of a clinical trial, lack access to viable treatment options or have been impacted in any way – your voice matters. Share your comments ahead of the hearing by **July 29 at 11:59pm ET**.

Submit Public Comments

MRF Partners With Advocacy Organizations to Support the Clinical Trial Modernization Act

This month, the MRF, alongside nearly 200 patient advocacy, public health and health care professional organizations signed on to a letter endorsing the Clinical Trial Modernization Act (S. 4440/H.R. 3521). The bipartisan legislation, if passed, would help eliminate cost and geographic barriers that prevent patients from participating in clinical trials. In addition, bill provisions outline that trial sponsors can provide patients with technology to help facilitate more remote participation in clinical trials. Bipartisan versions of the Clinical Trial Modernization Act were introduced in Congress, with Sens. Tim Scott (R-SC) and Mark Warner (D-VA) introducing the Senate bill in April 2026 and Reps. Raul Ruiz (D-CA-25) and August Pfluger (R-TX-11) introducing the House bill in May 2025.

MRF Joins AADA's Congressional Skin Cancer Screening on the Hill



Each May, the MRF joins our partners at the American Academy of Dermatology Association (AADA) for their annual Skin Cancer Screening on Capitol Hill. Members of Congress, congressional staff and the public are offered free skin cancer checks by dermatologists. This annual event brings together patient advocacy organizations, reinforces the importance of yearly skin cancer screenings and allows the MRF to engage lawmakers and their staff on the importance of comprehensive policy for the melanoma community. We look forward to joining the AADA on the Hill again next year!



1420 K Street NW, 7th Floor Washington, DC 20005 | Tel: (202) 347-9675
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