Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
H-405 The Capitol
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Chairmen Cole and Calvert and Ranking Members DeLauro and McCollum:

We thank you for your leadership and your efforts in securing and maintaining funding for the Bone Marrow Failure Disease Research Program (BMFRP). Thanks to your support, Congress recognized the urgent need to investigate bone marrow failure disorders and has prioritized investment for these disorders over the last 15 years. This much-needed funding has encouraged new investigators to pursue this rare group of diseases and given investigators a stable source of support to augment our basic understanding of these diseases. As you work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Department of Defense appropriations bill, we respectfully request you fund the BMFRP program at $7.5 million, which represents flat funding from Fiscal Year 2024.

Acquired and congenital bone marrow failure diseases occur when stem cells inside the bone marrow stop making enough healthy blood cells. Individuals exposed to radiological elements or various chemicals may be susceptible to acquired bone marrow failure diseases, including bone cancer. These life-threatening, non-contagious diseases can strike any person of any age, of any gender or any race, in any neighborhood anywhere in the world.

In 2017, the Veterans Administration established there was sufficient scientific and medical evidence of presumptive service connection for Veterans, Reservists, and National Guard members exposed to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune from 1953 through 1987 who later developed one of eight diseases which included aplastic anemia, myelodysplastic syndromes, and other bone marrow failure diseases[1].

Anecdotal data indicate that members of the Armed Forces who were deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan and other wars may have been exposed to environmental contaminants associated with bone marrow failure diseases. Though they affect thousands of men, women, and children

[1] Diseases Associated With Exposure to Contaminants in the Water Supply at Camp Lejeune, 82 FR 4173, Pages 4173-4185

every year, we still know remarkably little about what causes these diseases, and we know even less about how to neutralize them.

Importantly, the BMFRP can help us understand how to protect and treat members of the Armed Forces—and the public—who contract these life-threatening diseases. We now need to accelerate the progress to date and help our brave men and women who have served in our wars and were also exposed to chemicals while working on our military bases.

Since its initiation in FY 2008, Congress has appropriated over $71.6 million to the BMFRP to research the prevention, causes, and treatment of bone marrow failure diseases. BMFRP received an annual appropriation of $5 million in FY 2009, but funding levels dropped to $3 million annually thereafter until the FY 2021 appropriations cycle when the funding level was increased to $7.5 million.

From FY 2008 to 2020, nearly 75% of the research allocation for the program was to studies classified as basic or discovery research. These were essential investments in projects that provided a deeper understanding of the underlying determinants of the diseases the BMFRP is trying to address. While there is still much work that needs to be done to further understand these diseases, there is also an urgent need to support new and improved treatment options. The FY 2021 funding increase allowed the BMFRP to pivot towards additional translational research and technology development intended to accelerate the movement of scientific findings into clinical evaluation and utility. In FY 2022, over 40% of BMFRP investments were allocated towards translational research and technology development.

BMFRP investments are catalyzing real progress toward cures. Between FY 2008 and FY 2022, the BMFRP program invested in 100 innovative, novel and breakthrough projects, producing at least eight patent applications, and generating almost 150 publications in respected scientific journals. BMFRP research has resulted in five clinical trials moving promising therapeutic candidates through the pipeline.

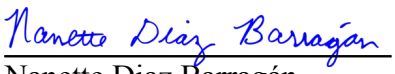
The FY 2026 funding will allow the BMFRP to continue supporting these critical projects. The outcomes of the BMFRP are clear – funded investigators have had a significant impact on the field of bone marrow failure research, resulting in improved disease understanding and the advance of potential treatments. Sustained funding will accelerate progress towards treatments and ultimately cures, providing hope to thousands of civilians, service members, veterans, and their families.

Given the clear connection to chemical exposure at Camp LeJeune and aplastic anemia discovered in the recent past, we respectfully urge you to increase funding to $7.5 million in FY 2026 for the Bone Marrow Failure Research Program (BMFRP) through the Defense Department's Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program.

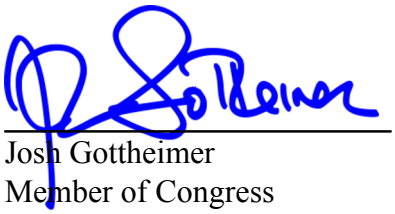
Thank you for your leadership and attention to our request.

Sincerely,

Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



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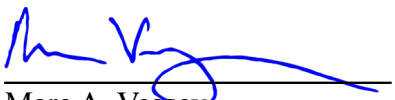

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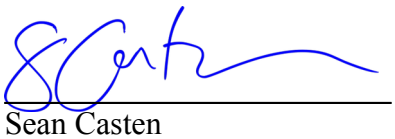

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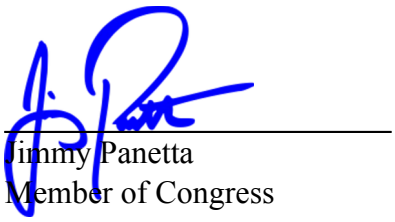
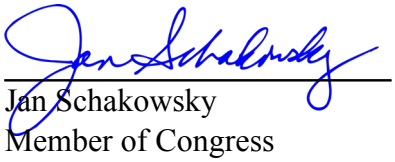


Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress