

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2006

The Honorable James T. Walsh
Chairman
Military Quality of Life, Veterans Affairs
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
H-143 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chet Edwards
Ranking Member
Military Quality of Life, Veterans Affairs
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Walsh and Ranking Member Edwards:

As you prepare for a conference with the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, we urge your support for \$19 million for the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) under Health Affairs, Operation and Maintenance, as contained in the Senate passed Defense Appropriations bill for FY2007. As \$7 million is already in the Defense Health Program POM, this \$12 million plus up would fund the program at a total of \$19 million for the year, to be administered by the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command at Fort Detrick.

Established in 1992, the DVBIC is a component of the military health care system that integrates clinical care and clinical follow-up, with applied research, treatment and training. The program was created after the first Gulf War to address the need for an overall systemic program for providing brain injury specific care and rehabilitation within the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs. It provides a unique and necessary collaboration between the DoD and the VA Healthcare systems to provide continuity of care from the battlefield to rehab and back to active duty or civilian life

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is now the signature injury of the conflict in Iraq, and some 28% of casualties involve TBI, many caused by blast injuries from improvised explosive devices. The DVBIC is leading the effort to elucidate patterns of brain injury from blasts, including providing guidelines for the assessment and follow-up care after blast-related TBI within the military environment. Ongoing DVBIC research is linked to clinical care programs to ensure that information learned from caring for these individuals will be disseminated to military and veteran treatment facilities and added to the medical literature. Continuing collaboration with military experts on blast injuries, working with preclinical subjects, also will help to better understand the injuries our troops sustain.

In addition to supporting and providing treatment, rehabilitation and case management at each of the eight primary DVBIC centers,¹ the DVBIC includes a regional network of additional

¹ Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, DC; James A. Haley Veterans Hospital, Tampa, FL; Naval Medical Center San Diego, San Diego, CA; Virginia NeuroCare, Inc., Charlottesville, VA; Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Minneapolis, MN; Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, Palo Alto, CA; Hunter McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Richmond, VA; Wilford Hall Medical Center, Lackland Air Force Base, TX.

secondary veterans hospitals capable of providing brain injury care and rehabilitation which are linked to the lead centers for training, referrals and consultation.

Continued strong congressional support is vital, **particularly due to the increased number of injuries from blasts and the need for strategically placed trained specialists to assure that all troops are counted and served.**

We respectfully request funding of **\$19 million for the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) as contained in the Senate passed Defense Appropriations bill for FY2007.**

It is critical that we continue to support our active duty military men and women sustaining brain injuries, and respectfully request \$12 million be added to the Defense Health Program for this program.

Sincerely,

Bill Pascrell Jr.

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Cc: Chairman Lewis
Ranking Member Obey
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