

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Calvert:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony with you today. The Defense Appropriations subcommittee is responsible for funding many branches of our armed forces, national intelligence infrastructure, and activities related to military personnel; operation and maintenance; procurement; research and development; and the Military Health System. As co-chair of the Congressional Colorectal Caucus, my focus today will be in two very specific areas of Defense and military health concerning colorectal cancer and cancer research in fiscal year 2023 (“FY23”).

Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program (PRCRP):

I first want to thank the Committee for including colorectal cancer research among the eligible cancer categories in the FY2022 Defense appropriations bill passed in the House. In its most recent Report to Congressional Defense Committees, colorectal cancer received the highest number of awards and research funding among eligible cancers and highlighted the importance of colorectal cancer and its relevance to military health.

This research has had bipartisan and bicameral support since Fiscal Year 2010 when colorectal cancer was first eligible for funding through the PRCRP including in this most recent FY2022 bill passed by the House Appropriations Committee. Certainly, we are aware that the Senate companion did not initially include colorectal cancer and are grateful that during conference negotiations colorectal cancer did remain in the final FY22 omnibus appropriations bill.

In this spirit, I request the committee continue its support of colorectal cancer as an eligible category of cancer research within the PRCRP.

Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP):

As the Committee begins its work on the FY2023 Defense appropriations bill, I ask for your support of \$20 million dollars to create a Colorectal Cancer Research Program within the Department of Defense (DoD) Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP).

As Member of this Committee are aware, colorectal cancer is the second highest leading cause of cancer death and is the fourth highest cause of new cancers among both men and women in the United States. Since 2000, The Department of Veterans Affairs has conducted multiple studies on colorectal cancer among its member population to better refine practices for screening, testing, and treatment. While colorectal cancer incidence rates in individuals over 50 years of age have remained stable or declined due to significant advancements in preventive screening, the incidence rates have been increasing among individuals under 50 years of age. This is of great concern especially considering that that the average age of our active and reserve duty military personnel is 29.6 years. And we have estimates that by 2030, colorectal cancer will be the leading cause of cancer death for Americans between the ages of 20 to 49 years.

For roughly a decade, colorectal cancer has been eligible for funding through the Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program (PRCRP). The PRCRP has supported research exploring issues important to both the warfighter and the civilian population including whether environmental chemicals are associated with increased risk of colorectal cancer and whether drugs for other conditions can be used to treat colorectal cancer. And this support and research remains vital.

The fact is that colorectal cancer remains among the top five deadliest cancers, yet it stands the lone cancer without its own research program within the CDMRP. All while it remains the number two cancer cause of death. It is time we apply the model that has been successful in other cancers such as breast and lung to colorectal cancer. We need a dedicated funding stream and strategic approach to innovate and deliver meaningful advancements in the fight against colorectal cancer.

I thank the committee for considering this bipartisan proposal – with my fellow Congressional Colorectal Caucus Co-Chair, the Honorable Rodney Davis (IL-13) – for \$20 million dollars to create a Colorectal Cancer Research Program within the CDMRP account in FY2023.

On behalf of my constituents in New Jersey's 10th Congressional District, I sincerely appreciate your thoughtfulness and consideration of these concerns and priorities in your diligent work on FY2023 appropriations. Thank you and have a good day.