

March 24, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

The undersigned organizations, representing active duty and veteran prostate cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, health care providers, researchers, and others in the prostate cancer community, write to urge you to provide the highest possible funding for the Prostate Cancer Research Program (PCRP) as you enact the Fiscal Year 2025 continuing resolution.

The Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) represents a crucial investment in innovative medical research that has led to groundbreaking discoveries in prostate cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. These advances are particularly important for our military community, who face a higher risk of prostate cancer compared to the general population. The military's approach to prostate cancer research has produced results not seen in civilian agencies. Since its establishment in 1997, the PCRP has been instrumental in developing seven new treatments, a number of diagnostic tools and biomarkers, and the creation of the prostate cancer clinical trial network to accelerate research.

Prostate cancer is the second deadliest cancer among American men, killing more than 35,000 men annuallyⁱ It is the second most common cancer diagnosis among active-duty menⁱⁱ and the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.ⁱⁱⁱ There are more than 3.3 million prostate cancer patients in the U.S. that depend on breakthroughs in research to continue their fight. Disturbingly, rates of prostate cancer have been increasing in recent years, especially the incidence rate of advanced disease.^{iv} Prostate cancer significantly impacts both active duty servicemen, veterans, and their families; in fact, active duty males are twice as likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer as their civilian counterparts,^v with negative effects on their ability to serve. There are disturbing rises in prostate cancer rates among military aviators.^{vi} In addition, servicemembers exposed to chemical agents such as Agent Orange in Vietnam are considered to be at increased risk of death from prostate cancer due to its association with high-grade disease in a population-based study of US Veterans^{vii} and prostate cancer is now considered a presumptive service-connected disability since passage of the PACT Act.^{viii}

The CDMRP's unique approach to funding high-risk, high-reward research has resulted in numerous breakthrough discoveries that would not have been possible through traditional funding mechanisms. Any reduction in funding would:

- Delay critical research progress;
- Limit opportunities for innovative research;
- Reduce the development of new treatments; and

- Potentially cost lives, with a disproportionate impact on those serving in our nation's armed forces.

We respectfully request your support in ensuring that the PCRFP receives the necessary funding to continue its vital work. Your advocacy for this program would demonstrate a strong commitment to men's health and to our service members and veterans who have served our country.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical matter.

Active Surveillance Patients International
American Association of Clinical Urologists (AACU)
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Urological Association (AUA)
AnCan Foundation
Arkansas Prostate Cancer Foundation
Cancer and Careers
CancerCare
Fans for the Cure
ICAN, International Cancer Advocacy Network
Idaho Prostate Cancer Coalition
Malecare Cancer Support
Men's Health Network
Mount Moriah
National Alliance of State Prostate Cancer Coalitions
National Black Leadership Commission on Health
National LGBT Cancer Project
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition (PPCC))
Prostate Conditions Education Council
Prostate Health Education Network
Prostate Network
RetireSafe
Triage Cancer
University of California, San Francisco
Your Prostate Cancer.help
ZERO Prostate Cancer

Cc:

COL Mark Hartell, Director, Congressional Directed Medical Research Program
Dr. David J. Smith, Acting Director, Defense Health Agency
Dr. Stephen Ferrara, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs

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- ⁱ American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2025. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2025.
- ⁱⁱ <https://aacrjournals.org/cebpa/article/18/6/1740/66901/Cancer-Incidence-in-the-U-S-Military-Population>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Levine RD, Ekanayake RN, Martin AC, et al. Prostate Cancer Foundation-Department of Veterans Affairs Partnership: A Model of Public-Private Collaboration to Advance Treatment and Care of Invasive Cancers. *Fed Pract*. 2020;37(Suppl 4):S32-S37. doi:10.12788/fp.0035
- ^{iv} American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2025. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2025.
- ^v Zhu K, Devesa SS, Wu H, et al. 2009. Cancer incidence in the U.S. military population: Comparison with rates from the SEER program. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* 18:1740-45.
- ^{vi} <https://www.aunews.net/issues/articles/2023/december-extra-2023/prostate-cancer-in-military-aviators-a-search-for-understanding-the-increased-malignancy-risk>
- ^{vii} Chamie K1, De Vere White RW, Lee D et al. 2008. Agent Orange exposure, Vietnam War veterans, and the risk of prostate cancer. *Cancer*. Nov 1;113(9):2464-70. doi: 10.1002/cncr.23695.
- ^{viii} US Department of Veterans Affairs. The PACT Act and your VA benefits. 2024. Accessed at <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/> on March 10, 2025.