February 15, 2018

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chairwoman  
Defense Appropriations Committee  
H-149, the Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pete Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
Defense Appropriations Committee  
1016 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Visclosky:

As you finalize the FY 2018 defense spending bill under the new budget cap agreement, our organizations respectfully request an appropriation of $8 million for Military Dental Research in the Navy Research, Development, Test and Evaluation budget line (R-1: line 131 PE: 0604771N ) in the FY 2018 defense appropriations account.

Military Dental Research (MDR) focuses on reconstructing and restoring function of craniofacial (face and skull) tissues and structures. This account has been frozen at $6 million for over four years while warfighters have continued to suffer from facial burns and injuries. Additional funding is needed to expand and accelerate the research which is unique and not duplicated by any other Federal dental program. In fact, it is the only program focused on head and facial trauma and oral disease.

Over 42% of injured service members have had wounds to the head and face. In the last decade alone, over 4,000 service members experienced facial injuries. These injuries cause significant physical and emotional challenges for the service member, often resulting in difficulties breathing, eating and speaking. Military Dental Researchers are the only investigators conducting research to mitigate the loss of facial tissue function and restoration with high quality bone and skin for these service members.

An important aspect of repairing facial wounds is finding better methods to address infections that are drug resistant. Solving this problem would not only benefit wounded soldiers, but would also have a tremendous impact on all American citizens. Each year, at least 2 million people become infected with antibiotic resistant bacteria and at least 23,000 people die as a direct result of these infections.

MDR research is conducted at the Joint Center of Excellence for Battlefield Health and Trauma (BHT) at Fort Sam Houston – San Antonio Military Medical Center. Dental Researchers there collaborate with scientists at the nation’s best universities and other military dental researchers to find solutions. Because of Congressional funding, the results of their work will not only aid wounded warriors but also civilians who suffer head or face injury due to trauma, burns or surgery.

Our organizations strongly believe that the funding for the MDR program is worthy and justifiable, even in today’s difficult budgetary environment, since the program has a direct and lasting impact on saving lives and improving the quality of life for our military personnel.

Sincerely,

American Dental Association  
American Association for Dental Research