



Society for
Women's Health Research

MAKING WOMEN'S HEALTH MAINSTREAM

December 2, 2020

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Mitch McConnell
Majority
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
304 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
437 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
2365 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1026 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger:

On behalf of the Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR), I am writing in support of requests led by Representatives Finkenauer and González-Colón along with Senators Romney and Warren to prioritize funding for endometriosis research in the upcoming fiscal year. Specifically, we ask that you include report language that lists endometriosis as an eligible condition under the Department of Defense Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP).

Endometriosis is a chronic inflammatory disease that occurs when tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows elsewhere in the body. The disease, which affects about 1 in 10 reproductive-age women, can cause symptoms like infertility, pelvic and back pain, painful periods, painful sex, and intestinal problems. The disease is also costly, with estimated health care expenditures for endometriosis at \$69.4 billion per year in the United States.¹ Despite its prevalence and potentially severe effects on women, their families, and society, endometriosis is not well known or well understood.²

In large part, this is due to limited research investment in the biological basis of endometriosis, innovative diagnostic methods, and minimally invasive, fertility-preserving treatments. Improving federal investment in biomedical research will help reduce the disease's cost to our health care system, and improve quality of life for patients living with this diagnosis.

¹ As-Sanie S, et al. (2019). Assessing research gaps and unmet needs in endometriosis. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 221(2), 86-94. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2019.02.033>

² Society for Women's Health Research (2018). Endometriosis Fact Sheet. Accessible from: <http://swhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/SWHR-Endometriosis-Factsheet.pdf>

SWHR supports the inclusion of endometriosis as eligible for funding under the DOD PRMRP in FY 2021. It is our understanding that the current report put forth by the Senate Appropriations Committee does not include endometriosis among the conditions eligible under the PRMRP. Endometriosis was included in both FY 2018 and FY 2020, and this opportunity for investment in endometriosis research through the PRMRP must remain available. When research funding is low or inconsistent for a medical condition, it is difficult to attract researchers to specialize in that condition or apply for related research grants. We respectfully ask that you reinstate endometriosis as an eligible condition for FY 2021.

We also support continued, robust levels of funding for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in final FY 2021 appropriations legislation. SWHR appreciates efforts in both the House and Senate to increase funding for NICHD in FY 2021 and ask that the highest possible increase be preserved in final legislation.

Over 6 million people in the United States are living with endometriosis. The critical issues that face women with endometriosis must be addressed via expanded research into the condition. As such, we ask that you refrain from limiting research opportunities for scientists hoping to gain improved insight into endometriosis.

Thank you for considering our recommendations regarding endometriosis research in the current federal funding cycle. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact SWHR's Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs, Melissa Laitner, PhD, MPH, at melissa@swhr.org.

Sincerely,



Kathryn G. Schubert, MPP
President and Chief Executive Officer
Society for Women's Health Research