



May 6, 2022

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Chair
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veteran Affairs, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veteran Affairs, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Heinrich and Ranking Member Boozman,

We are writing to respectfully request that your subcommittee include robust funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Neurology Centers of Excellence focused on epilepsy, headache, multiple sclerosis, and Parkinson's disease in Fiscal Year 2023.

Nine million Veterans are enrolled in VA care around the nation, including many who live with neurologic disease—some of which is service-connected. These Veterans often benefit from the unique care of neurology-related Centers of Excellence, which are fully integrated into a VA medical center to better coordinate multidisciplinary care. Each neurologic condition has primary centers and consortium sites around the United States. Each of these centers provide state-of-the-art clinical care, educational resources for Veterans and other VA health care providers, and conduct medical research. Through the rapid adoption of telehealth, Veterans around the country are benefiting even more from the specialized services provided by these centers.

Congress has played a key role in creating and maintaining these centers over the last two decades as the increasing number of veterans affected by neurologic conditions has become clear. In fiscal year 2022, Congress provided strong vocal support for all the centers, directed VA to double the number of headache centers around the country, provided \$10 million for the epilepsy centers, and requested a report from the VA focused on opportunities to enhance care for veterans with neurologic conditions.

Despite this progress, it remains clear that more resources are required for these centers to provide the best care possible for our Veterans. In particular, it is remarkable that the multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease centers have not received a significant increase in funding for nearly 20 years despite increases in Veterans with these conditions. Funding has not significantly increased even after the VA officially recognized Parkinson's disease as being associated with Agent Orange in 2010 and Traumatic Brain Injuries in 2012. Multiple sclerosis is a condition that is presumptively service connected as long as it is diagnosed within seven years after separating from service – and the number of diagnosed veterans with MS has more than doubled since these centers were founded.

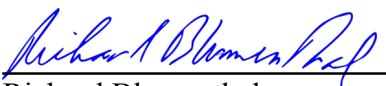
Even the centers that have experienced increases over the years could benefit from further investment. The epilepsy centers, for instance, are interested in expanding the tele-EEG program and adding centers to improve care in underserved areas and decrease geographic voids for some veterans with epilepsy who are unable to drive due to seizure frequency.

For each of the centers, having strong and stable funding is critical to their ability to recruit and retain physicians and other health care providers, allowing them to care for our Veterans.

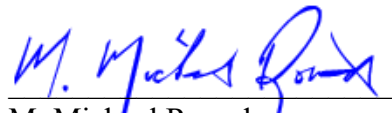
The VA Neurology Centers of Excellence are providing an essential service to America's Veterans who live with from chronic neurologic conditions. To continue and enhance their ability to provide the best care possible, we respectfully request the inclusion of this report language for fiscal year 2023:

Neurology Centers of Excellence. — The Committee recognizes the increasing number of Veterans affected by neurologic conditions, including but not limited to: epilepsy, headache, multiple sclerosis, and Parkinson's disease. The Neurology Centers of Excellence provide essential innovative clinical care, education, and research efforts focused on these conditions. The Committee applauds the Department for its recent investments into the headache and epilepsy centers and encourages their continued ongoing support and maintenance. The Committee directs the Department to make similar investments in the multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease centers, which have not received a significant increase in funding for nearly 20 years. This bill includes at least the following amounts for maintaining and expanding the Neurology Centers of Excellence: \$19,000,000 for epilepsy; \$25,000,000 for headache; \$5,000,000 for multiple sclerosis; and \$16,000,000 for Parkinson's disease.

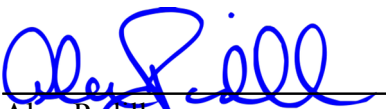
Sincerely,



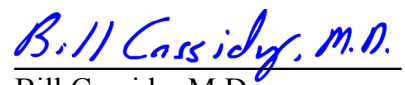
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



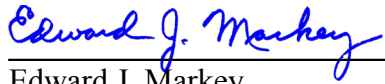
M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



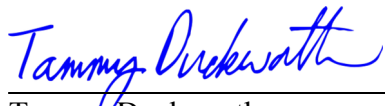
Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



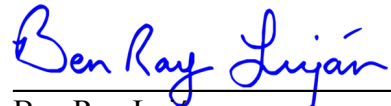
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



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Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

