DATE

The Honorable Kay Granger

Chairwoman

House Appropriations Committee

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro

Ranking Member

House Appropriations Committee

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray

Chair

Senate Appropriations Committee

U.S. Senate

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins

Vice Chair

Senate Appropriations Committee

U.S. Senate

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Granger, Chair Murray, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Vice Chair Collins,

On behalf of the Society of Gynecologic Oncology (SGO), thank you for your leadership during the fiscal year (FY) 2024 appropriations process. As you work to finalize spending for FY 2024, we urge you to provide full and robust funding for gynecologic cancer research and care. Specifically, we urge you to provide robust funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Cancer Institute (NCI), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and we request that you support the creation of a line item for endometrial cancer in the Department of Defense’s (DoD) Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) funded at $10 million, and an appropriation of $45 million for the DoD Ovarian Cancer Research Program (OCRP) in FY 2024.

The SGO is the premier medical specialty society for health care professionals trained in the comprehensive management of gynecologic cancers. Our more than 2,800 members include physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses and patient advocates who collaborate with the Foundation for Women’s Cancer to increase public awareness of gynecologic cancers and improve the care of those diagnosed with gynecologic cancers. Our primary mission focuses on supporting research, disseminating knowledge, raising the standards of practice in the prevention and treatment of gynecologic malignancies, and collaborating with other organizations dedicated to gynecologic cancers and related fields, all with the ultimate vision of eradicating gynecologic cancers.

**Funding for the NIH**

Significant advances have been made in the field of gynecologic oncology, through diligent research and collaboration with patients eager to be involved. However, the incidence and mortality associated with endometrial cancer continues to rise, and the gap in racial disparities in endometrial cancer is unfortunately widening. There is still no screening test for this cancer, for which early symptoms include abnormal vaginal bleeding, which may frequently be presumed to be related to non-cancerous conditions. Robust, sustained and predictable funding is necessary for all biomedical research,

particularly research on gynecologic cancers. **Therefore, as Congress finalizes funding for FY 2024, the SGO requests that you adopt the Senate Appropriations Committee approved level of funding of $47.724 billion, an increase of $943 million, to the NIH, and $7.380 billion, an increase of $60 million, for the NCI.** This funding is crucial to support the NIH’s and NCI’s capacity for promising science in all disciplines, including gynecologic oncology.

**Funding for Gynecologic Cancer Programs at the CDC**

In 2023, it is estimated that over 114,000 women would be diagnosed with a gynecologic cancer and more than 34,000 would die. The incidence of gynecologic cancers is increasing, and we are seeing stark health care disparities and disproportionate impacts on our most vulnerable citizens and minority populations. In the last 50 years we have seen significant declines in the incidence of cervical cancer with screening and the introduction of a safe and effective high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. Yet, each year there are still 13,000 women who are diagnosed with cervical cancer due to barriers to access to care and education.

For these reasons, support for gynecologic cancer programs at the CDC is crucial. **As you appropriate funding for FY 2024, the SGO requests that you support no less than $14.5 million, the Senate Labor-HHS funding level, for the Ovarian Cancer Control Initiative and $11.5 million for Johanna’s Law at the CDC.** Both requests represent flat funding. Johanna’s Law supports programs, research projects and activities at the CDC aimed at promoting education and awareness of gynecologic cancers, and the Ovarian Cancer Control Initiative is a program designed to monitor demographic data and other factors at the population level around ovarian cancer diagnosis, treatment, and survival. Adequate support and funding for the CDC is necessary to meet the evolving public health needs for gynecologic cancers.

**Support Gynecologic Cancer Research in the DoD**

SGO continues to be concerned about the increasing prevalence and mortality of endometrial and ovarian cancers, which not only affects the health and well-being of U.S. military service members and their families, but also troop readiness. There are now almost 230,000 women who are U.S. military active-duty personnel, accounting for over 17 percent of the total force.[[1]](#footnote-1) Women are now the fastest growing patient population using VHA services and make up 30 percent of all new VHA patients.[[2]](#footnote-2) The Journal of Women’s Health reported that a 2010 study examining cancer among women treated in the VHA system found gynecologic cancers comprised 12 percent of all cancers identified in women.

Endometrial cancer is the most common gynecologic cancer, and the fourth most common malignancy among women in the United States trailing only breast, lung, and colorectal. In 2023, approximately 66,200 new cases of endometrial cancer are expected, and about 13,030 deaths.[[3]](#footnote-3) Obesity is strongly liked to endometrial cancer’s incidence and mortality, particularly among Asian, Hispanic, and Black women.[[4]](#footnote-4) Data show that not only is endometrial cancer more common in Black women than White

women, Black women have a two-fold higher likelihood of dying from endometrial cancer[[5]](#footnote-5) with indications that factors other than access to care are responsible for this racial disparity in survival.[[6]](#footnote-6) Black women now constitute nearly one third of all women in the U.S. armed forces. Endometrial cancer research is currently included in the DoD’s Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program; however, it does not have a predictable and regular funding source, which a separate CDMRP funding line would provide.

Additionally, ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer-related death in women and the deadliest of gynecologic cancers. In the military, gynecologic cancers represent 12 percent of all cancer identified in women, and ovarian cancer is one of the most common diagnoses.[[7]](#footnote-7) According to the recent Military Health System (MHS) data, over 300 active Service Members encountered ovarian cancer and over 20,000 DoD beneficiaries were diagnosed with ovarian cancer over the past ten years.[[8]](#footnote-8) Created in 1997, the DoD OCRP continues to support high impact, innovative research that promotes readiness for military members and their families, as well as the overall health of all Americans. The program has funded key studies that have led to new discoveries and advancements in the treatment and understanding of ovarian cancer.

**For these reasons, the SGO asks for your support for the creation of a line item for endometrial cancer in the DoD CDMRP funded at $10 million, and an appropriation of $45 million in funding for the OCRP in the DoD FY 2024 appropriations bill.** This funding will allow for the pursuit of new research to improve the diagnosis and treatment of endometrial cancer and preserve current and future investments in ovarian cancer research.

Thank you again for your leadership and working to finalize FY 2024 appropriations to provide necessary investments for these critical programs. If you have questions, or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Erika Miller at emiller@dc-crd.com.

Sincerely,



Angeles Alvarez Secord, MD, MHSc

SGO President 2023-2024

cc: The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair, Labor-HHS Subcommittee

 The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, Labor-HHS Subcommittee

 The Honorable Ken Calvert, Chair, Defense Subcommittee

The Honorable Betty McCollum, Ranking Member, Defense Subcommittee

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Chair, Labor-HHS Subcommittee

 The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member, Labor-HHS Subcommittee

The Honorable Jon Tester, Chair, Defense Subcommittee

The Honorable Susan Collins, Ranking Member, Defense Subcommittee

1. https://diversity.defense.gov/Portals/51/Women%202021\_ACC.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/about-us.asp [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.cancer.org/cancer/endometrial-cancer/about/key-statistics.html [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Clarke MA, Devesa SS, Hammer A, Wentzensen N. Racial and Ethnic Differences in Hysterectomy-Corrected Uterine Corpus Cancer Mortality by Stage and Histologic Subtype. JAMA Oncol. 2022 Jun 1;8(6):895-903. doi: 10.1001/jamaoncol.2022.0009. PMID: 35511145; PMCID: PMC9073658 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35143040/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Leah L. Zullig, PhD, MPH, Karen M. Goldstein, MD, MSPH, Kellie J. Sims, PhD, MS, Christina D. Williams, PhD, Michael Chang, MD, Dawn Provenzale, MD, MHS, and Michael J. Kelley, MD5, J Womens Health (Larchmt). 2019 Feb 1; 28(2): 268–275. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. https://cdmrp.health.mil/ocrp/default [↑](#footnote-ref-8)