

July 14, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable John Boozman
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Jon Ossoff
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chair Boozman, and Ranking Member Ossoff:

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS) is a national non-profit organization comprised of 6,000+ geriatrics healthcare professionals and basic and clinical researchers dedicated to improving the health, independence, and quality of life of older Americans. AGS is an anti-discriminatory organization. We believe in a society where we all are supported by and able to contribute to our communities and where bias and discrimination no longer impact healthcare access, quality, and outcomes for older adults and their care partners. The Society leads efforts to incorporate attention to older adults living with multiple chronic conditions into research^{1,2} and clinical care^{3,4} and is a champion for improving attention to the unique health care needs of older adults in workforce training.^{5,6} We believe that understanding disease across the lifespan⁷ is important to extending healthspan—the time someone lives in generally good health—for all of us as we age. As the Subcommittee works on its fiscal year (FY) 2026 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, **we respectfully request:**

- **\$1.2 billion for the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program,**
- **\$100 million for VA research facilities, and**
- **\$25 million for the VA Office of Information and Technology (OIT)**

¹ Advancing Geriatrics Research: AGS/NIA Conference Series. American Geriatrics Society. Accessed April 10, 2025.

<https://www.americangeriatrics.org/programs/advancing-geriatrics-research-agsnia-conference-series>

² The AGS/AGING Learning Collaborative. AGS CoCare. Accessed April 10, 2025.

<https://mccresearch.agscocare.org/what-is-the-ags-aging-learning-collaborative>

³ American Geriatrics Society Expert Panel on the Care of Older Adults with Multimorbidity. Guiding principles for the care of older adults with multimorbidity: an approach for clinicians. *J Am Geriatr Soc*. 2012;60(10):e1-e25. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-5415.2012.04188.x. Epub 2012 Sep 19. PMID: 22994865; PMCID: PMC4450364.

⁴ McNabney MK, Green AR, Burke M, et al. Complexities of care: common components of models of care in geriatrics. *J Am Geriatr Soc*. 2022;70(7):1960–72. doi:10.1111/jgs.17811

⁵ American Geriatrics Society. Letters to House and Senate Appropriations Leadership on FY 2025 Funding for Geriatrics Workforce Training Programs. June 5, 2024. Accessed April 10, 2025.


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⁶ AGS Advancing Health Care in Surgical and Related Medical Specialties. Special Collection. *J Am Geriatr Soc*. Accessed April 10, 2025.

<https://agsjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/hub/journal/15325415/agsadvancinggeriatrics>

⁷ Inclusion Across the Lifespan in Human Subjects Research. National Institutes of Health. Updated February 27, 2025. Accessed April 10, 2025. <https://grants.nih.gov/policy-and-compliance/policy-topics/inclusion/lifespan>

An important framework for how geriatrics health professionals care for older adults is the Geriatrics 5Ms (see table on the right).⁸ Our members are on the frontlines of caring for older Americans, many of whom are living with multiple chronic conditions,

THE GERIATRICS 5Ms		Geriatrics health professionals focus on these 4Ms...
MULTICOMPLEXITY ...describes the whole person, typically an older adult, living with multiple chronic conditions, advanced illness, and/or with complicated biopsychosocial needs 	MIND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mentation ■ Dementia ■ Delirium ■ Depression
	MOBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Amount of mobility; function ■ Impaired gait and balance ■ Fall injury prevention
	MEDICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Polypharmacy, deprescribing ■ Optimal prescribing ■ Adverse medication effects and medication burden
	WHAT MATTERS MOST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Each individual's own meaningful health outcome goals and care preferences

Tinetti M, Huang A, Molnar F. The Geriatrics 5Ms: a new way of communicating what we do. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2017;65(9):2115.

advanced illness, and/or with complicated biopsychosocial issues. The Geriatrics 5Ms informed the development of the 4Ms of age-friendly care (What **M**atters, **M**edications, **M**entation, and **M**obility) of the Age-Friendly Health Systems movement which seeks to reimagine the 21st century health system so as to provide care that is age-friendly, respects the goals and preferences of older persons, and meaningfully and substantially includes family caregivers in the plan of care.⁹

Many AGS members work within the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system, serving in a variety of roles to advise VA leadership on the unique needs of older, medically complex veterans. These roles include leading the demonstration of new care models, performing cutting-edge research, and training the VA workforce to provide the highest standard of care for older veterans and their families.

We appreciate Congress' ongoing support of the VA research programs that improve the care of older veterans across the US and urge your strong support for FY 2026 funding to improve the Medical and Prosthetic Research Program and the physical and information technology (IT) infrastructure within the VA.

Medical and Prosthetic Research Program

AGS requests that the Medical and Prosthetic Research Program be funded at \$1.2 billion in FY 2026.

Our request aligns with the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research, a diverse coalition representing national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations. The funding level AGS is requesting would preserve the VA's longstanding legacy of healthcare advancement for all of us as we age and allow for meaningful growth above inflation in research at VA medical centers. Continued investment in groundbreaking initiatives and scientific discoveries is critically important to the ensuring that VA research continues to support improving the health and well-being of veterans and all Americans. Additionally, the increased investment would help strengthen the VA's participation in groundbreaking programs, such as the Million Veteran Program (MVP), support recruitment and retention of researchers, and address the existing restricted IT capacity while ensuring continued support for research on chronic and emerging needs of our nation's veterans.

⁸ Tinetti M, Huang A, Molnar F. The Geriatrics 5M's: A new way of communicating what we do. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2017;65(9):2115. doi:[10.1111/jgs.14979](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.14979)

⁹ Mate KS, Berman A, Laderman M, Kabaceneil A, Fulmer T. Creating age-friendly health systems - a vision for better care of older adults. *Healthc.* 2018;6(1):4-6. doi:[10.1016/j.hidsi.2017.05.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hidsi.2017.05.005)

Sustained and enhanced federal investment in VA research is essential to delivering high-quality, coordinated, and efficient care to our nation's growing population of older veterans, particularly those living with chronic disease. According to recent estimates, nearly 50 percent of the 15.8 million veterans in the US are 65 or older¹⁰ and 1.3 million are over the age of 85,¹¹ including over 180,000 surviving World War II veterans and more than 6.3 million Korean and Vietnam veterans.¹² The VA has made vital scientific contributions and informed our understanding of chronic diseases related to aging, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, which affect 80 percent of people who are 65 and older.¹³ More than a third of VA patients 65 and older have 3 or more chronic conditions and account for 67 percent of healthcare costs within the VA meaning this research is all the more important.¹⁴ Further, the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program aims to improve the health of our veterans and lay the foundation for improved care within the VA – the largest managed health care system in our nation.¹⁵

VA research actively supports more than 7,000 research projects across the country each year. This work expands knowledge in areas critical to veterans' healthcare needs, most notably for enhanced understanding of mental health conditions, aging, health services delivery, cancer, and heart health. The work of VA researchers' benefits veterans and all Americans. VA researchers develop and support innovative health research initiatives, including programs that focus on high-priority issues important to the health and well-being of aging veterans and their care partners. For example, last year, VA research studies included addressing military environmental exposures, preventing suiciding, improving lung cancer screening, and creating an injectable gel with potential to treat degenerative disc disease.

Furthermore, the Veterans Health Administration is the nation's second largest federal funder of graduate medical education and plays a critical role in developing the next generation of health scientists who are focused on improving care for older veterans given their discoveries often lead to improvements in how we care for all Americans. In order to recruit and retain talented researchers, sufficient funding is needed to support the promising and often cutting-edge research undertaken by new investigators and the facilities utilized by aging researchers. Investment also helps sustain important work and mentoring conducted by those with longstanding experience in the field of aging research.

AGS is concerned that without adequate appropriations, the VA not only could fall behind in its role as a major contributor to medical and scientific research but also be unable to meet its statutory mission of training a new generation of investigators to serve the needs of veterans and the nation. Congress must ensure that we can properly care for veterans and ensure they can thrive long after their service to our country.

¹⁰ US Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables: Veteran Status. Accessed April 15, 2025.

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2023.S2101?q=veterans&t=Veterans&hidePreview=true>

¹¹ National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. US Department of Veterans Affairs. Table 1L: Vet Pop 2023 Living Veterans by Age Group, Gender, 2023-2053. Accessed April 15, 2025.

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¹² Vespa J. Aging Veterans: America's Veteran Population in Later Life. July 2023. Accessed April 15, 2025.

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¹³ National Prevention Council. Healthy Aging in Action: Advancing the National Prevention Strategy. Published November 2016. Accessed March 30, 2025. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/healthy-aging-in-action-final.pdf>

¹⁴ Yoon J, Zulman D, Scott JY, Maciejewski ML. Costs associated with multimorbidity among VA patients. *Med Care*. 2014;42(Suppl 3):S31-36. doi:[10.1097/MLR.0000000000000061](https://doi.org/10.1097/MLR.0000000000000061)

¹⁵ Veterans Health Administration. US Department of Veterans Affairs. Updated January 20, 2025. Accessed April 15, 2025.

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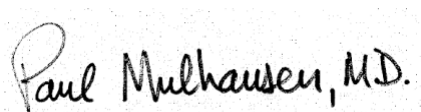
Physical and IT Infrastructure

AGS also requests that the Committee provide at least \$100 million to support VA research facilities and at least \$25 million for the VA OIT budget. The funding shortage in VA research facilities, including IT infrastructure, was established in 2012 in a congressionally mandated report on systematic research infrastructure improvements, indicating the need for upgraded resources in order to have enhanced facilities.¹⁶ For state-of-the-art research, facilities utilized for aging research need state-of-the-art technology, and equipment. The VA's assessment of facilities in 2020 showed that significant insufficiencies remain and estimated more than \$200 million was needed to correct the deficiencies found in the report, including \$99.5 million for substantial and immediate needs to correct life safety hazards.¹⁶ The failure to provide sufficient capital for infrastructure, maintenance, and renovations for VA research purposes significantly impacts the VA's ability to expand veterans' access to high-quality clinical trials, reduces the real-world impact of VA research, and increases constraints to the MVP and other VA Big Data/Data Science programs. Moreover, to advance and modernize VA research programs, AGS believes increased funding would support IT development and maintenance, including the purchase and maintenance of IT infrastructure; increased data storage and access capabilities, data security, interoperability with affiliated partners; and a transition to more robust and functional cloud computing platforms for clinical, health management, benefits, security, and research programs. We encourage the Committee to increase funding in the FY 2026 Military Construction, Veteran Affairs, and Related Agencies appropriations bill to ensure aging research facility and IT infrastructure requirements are being met.

Additionally, we urge Congress to exercise its oversight authority on the changes being made to the VA workforce and policies as well as clinical trials conducted at the VA without adequate input from Congress or the American public and the impact of these actions on our veterans and the VA's research enterprise. These changes put at risk the 100 years of bipartisan progress in research at the VA—research that has contributed to preventing chronic disease and extending the healthspan of millions of Americans—and undermine the US leadership in science and the future of biomedical research.

Thank you for your consideration of our funding request for VA research. If you have comments or questions about this request or other issues related to the well-being and healthy aging of older veterans, please contact Anna Kim, Senior Manager, Public Affairs & Advocacy, at 212-308-1414 or akim@americangeriatrics.org.

Sincerely,



Paul Mulhausen, MD
President



Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA
Chief Executive Officer

¹⁶ Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research. A Budget Proposal for FY 2025. Published 2024. Accessed April 15, 2025. https://www.friendsofva.org/files/ugd/26cec6_ba095f11c5d949d98ee438b995ba8f05.pdf

July 14, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable John Carter
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Ranking Member
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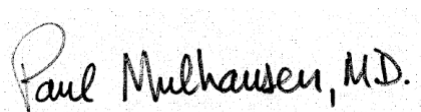
Physical and IT Infrastructure

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Sincerely,



Paul Mulhausen, MD
President



Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA
Chief Executive Officer

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