May 29, 2025

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Defense
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Defense
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Re: FY 2026 Funding Request for CDMRP Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research**

Dear Chairman McConnell and Ranking Member Coons:

The undersigned organizations and individuals representing clinicians, researchers, and consumers of orthotic brace and prosthetic limb care required by millions of individuals with limb loss and limb impairment, including servicemembers, veterans, and civilians across the United States, are writing to request that Congress appropriate $15 million for FY 2026 to fund the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP)'s Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research Program (OPORP). We further request that Congress ensure orthotics and prosthetics (O&P) outcomes research is also eligible to be funded as part of the CDMRP's Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program, to help implement the 5-year O&P outcomes research strategic plan published by CDMRP in January 2023. See FY 25 Senate DOD Appropriations Subcommittee Report (S. Rep. No. 118-204, p. 279, 281-282) accompanying S. 4921 here.

In FY 2014, OPORP was established by Congress in the U.S. Department of Defense to support research to improve health outcomes and the well-being of individuals with limb loss or limb impairment. According to CDMRP, the loss of a limb or limb functionality is one of the most debilitating traumatic injuries sustained by U.S. military personnel. There were over 1700 warriors who lost limbs in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Currently, over 160,000 individuals with limb loss are covered by the DOD health program.

In its first year, OPORP was funded at $10 million. By FY 2020, its annual appropriation had risen to $15 million, then to $20 million in FY 2022, and $15 million in FY 2023. This consistent support recognizes both past accomplishments and the continued need to fund research to address increased limb loss and limb impairment due to trauma, cancer, and vascular disease.

O&P care is critical to restoring function in both the military and civilian populations due to a wide variety of musculoskeletal and neuromuscular conditions. CDMRP issued in 2023 a Strategic Plan that provided five-year goals for future OPORP research, stating that while there have been great advances in the technology of orthotics and prosthetics, outcomes research is still needed to inform users, care providers, and policy makers about how these orthotic and prosthetic interventions can best assist individuals to improve their function, enhance their quality of life, and restore their ability to return to duty or work and increase their productivity. CDMRP has acknowledged that in the VA health care system alone, the majority of veterans with amputations have lost limbs due to the progression of vascular disease. Also, stroke is now the leading cause of long-term disability in the U.S. and ankle-foot orthoses are a key treatment for helping stroke patients compensate for muscle weakness and improve overall mobility.

For the past decade, OPORP has contributed to significant advances in knowledge pertaining to treatment options in prosthetic and/or orthotic care, improving patient outcomes and measurement tools to assess those outcomes, and providing a fundamental base for evidence-based and clinically informed decision-making.

Clearly, there is a critical need to continue this research. Therefore, we respectfully ask you to support $15 million in FY 2026 funding for the CDMRP's Orthotics and Prosthetics Outcomes Research Program, and to ensure that orthotics and prosthetics outcomes research is also eligible for funding by the CDMRP's Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Non-profit Associations (list names here)

Individual O&P Researchers, Programs and Institutions (list names here)