



March 1, 2021

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
H-405
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
H-405
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Calvert:

As the National President of the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), I am writing you today to urge you to support an innovative pilot program with the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) using the Military Technology Enterprise Consortium (MTEC).

BVA is the only Congressionally chartered Veterans Service Organization created for, consisting of, and led by Visually Impaired Veterans focused on the issues, advocacy, and mentorship vital to all veterans and families coping with sight loss regardless of service connection. One of the legislative priorities of BVA has been the establishment and continued funding of the CDMRP's Vision Research Program (VRP).

Current law (10 U.S.C 2371) authorizes the Department of Defense (DoD) to use Other Transactions Authorities (OTA) such as MTEC to provide for a flexible and innovative acquisition process. In 2016, MTEC partnered with the U.S. Army Medical Research & Development Command in a 10-year OTA and thus far has executed on over \$175 million in research and development projects for the DoD.

Although the VRP has been highly successful, BVA believes that utilizing MTEC has several key advantages over the traditional CDMRP process. These advantages include the ability to award funding more quickly, lower overhead rates that leave more funding available for research, the ability for teaming with investigators, the ability for DoD to continue funding promising projects beyond the initial award, and increased potential for commercialization of technology.

Given these advantages, BVA is supporting a three-year pilot program to validate the use of the MTEC mechanism with the VRP and requests that language be included in the NDAA FY 2022 to establish such a MTEC pilot.

Thanking you for your consideration and kindest regards.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas A. Zampieri, Ph.D.
National President