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For Immediate Release

Eating Disorders Eligible for Research Funding to Help Military Servicemembers and Families

Led by Senator Shelley Moore Capito, for the first time eating disorders are eligible for research funding to help our warriors and their families affected by this serious mental illness.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 30, 2017) — As we remember our fallen warriors this past weekend, Congress has taken another step forward to helping the men and women serving our country. After months of negotiations and two Continuing Resolutions, Congress reached an agreement to fund the federal government's FY 2017 budget on May 5th. This budget package represents the first time that Congress permitted federal research funding to help our military members and their families affected by eating disorders. Led by Senator Shelley Moore Capito [R-WV] on the Appropriations Committee, along with support from Senator Amy Klobuchar [D-MN] and former Senator Kelly Ayotte [R-NH] through a [letter to the Committee](#), these Senators worked to ensure that eating disorders be included in the Department of Defense's [Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program's](#) (CDMRP) Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program. The CDMRP supports research across the full range of science and medicine, with an underlying goal of enhancing the health and well-being of military servicemembers, veterans, retirees, and their family members. This will provide an average of \$3-\$5 million in new eating disorders research funding.

“Our servicemen and women devote their lives to keeping America safe and free, and it’s important that we do our part to make sure they are cared for as well,” **Senator Capito said.** “These funds will support important research to help military families and their loved ones who are struggling with eating disorders, and I’m thrilled we were able to secure them in the recent funding agreement. I will continue working to ensure all our servicemen and women have the care and support they need.”

In the United States, 30 million Americans experience a clinically significant eating disorder during their lifetime. Research has shown that there is a higher prevalence rate for eating

disorders among military servicemembers than the civilian population. A *Clinical Psychology* study showed that as many as 30 percent of female cadets and 34 percent of active duty female servicemembers were at-risk for an eating disorder across all branches of the military, with very low rates of seeking treatment. Dependents of servicemembers report similar conditions at a significantly higher rate than the civilian population—over 20 percent. A *Military Medicine* study also showed significant relationships between Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and lifetime eating disorders.

Eating disorders are serious and complex mental health conditions that affect people of all genders, ages, body sizes, races, sexual orientations and socioeconomic statuses, and have a notably higher prevalence rate in women. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness. Including eating disorders to be eligible for research funding through the Department of Defense's Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program has the potential to benefit military members and their families and vastly improve eating disorder research in this country for all who are or will be affected by this deadly disease.

Eating Disorders Coalition member, the [National Eating Disorders Association \(NEDA\)](#), supported this effort in FY 2017, and has since picked up the torch for future FY 2018 funding under the Congressional Directed Medical Research Program. In addition to maintaining the current FY 2017 research funding, NEDA is currently advocating for a specific eating disorders research line item and funding increase to \$10 million dollars under the CDMRP. EDC and NEDA united together during the April 5, 2017 Capitol Hill Advocacy Day to advocate for both this new CDMRP increased research funding initiative and 21st Century Cures implementation.

The Eating Disorders Coalition is a Washington, D.C.-based, federal advocacy organization comprised of treatment providers, advocacy organizations and entities, parents of children with eating disorders, and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. For more information contact Katrina Velasquez at the Eating Disorders Coalition at kvelasquez@eatingdisorderscoalition.org. Additional resources can also be found at www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org.

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