



October 18, 2024

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representative
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Wicker, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith:

The undersigned organizations representing stomach cancer patients, survivors, providers, researchers and caregivers write to express strong support of Section 748 of the Senate Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that calls for a report on a plan for *Helicobacter Pylori* (*H. pylori*) testing for certain members of the Armed Forces. We respectfully request this language be retained in the FY 2025 NDAA conference agreement

There is a high risk of *H. pylori* — a human carcinogen — among military service members. Undetected and untreated, *H. pylori* can lead to deadly or chronic conditions such as stomach cancer, ulcers and gastritis. Based on a recently published study,¹ one fourth of the U.S. veteran population is at risk for benign and malignant consequences of chronic *H. pylori* infection. However, studies show that when *H. pylori* is detected through testing and treated to eradication, the risk of stomach cancer drops significantly.^{2,3}

Research shows *H. pylori* may be present in individuals prior to enlistment or commissioning into the service, particularly among those who come from lower socioeconomic status or who are foreign born. Active duty individuals are at increased risk of contracting *H. pylori* especially if they are deployed outside the continental United States in areas in which *H. pylori* is highly prevalent, or who are subject to crowded living conditions. Given the considerable health and cost of care burden associated with untreated *H. pylori*, as well as its potential impact on mission readiness, our organizations strongly support an *H. pylori* testing program for members of the Armed Forces, as well as processes and protocols for treating individuals who test positive *H. pylori*.

Completion of a report on a plan for *H. pylori* testing as called for in Section 748 of the Senate FY 2025 NDAA would constitute a critical step in stomach cancer prevention and is why we ask that the conference agreement retain the Senate language. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Camille Bonta, policy advisor for Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer at (202) 320-3658 or cbonta@summithealthconsulting.com.

Sincerely,

American College of Gastroenterology
American Gastroenterological Association
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer
Gastric Cancer Foundation

¹ Shah SC, Halvorson AE, Lee D, Bustamante R, McBay B, et al. Helicobacter pylori Burden in the United States According to Individual Demographics and Geography: A Nationwide Analysis of the Veterans Healthcare System. Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol. 2024 Jan;22(1):42-50.e26. doi: 10.1016/j.cgh.2023.05.016. Epub 2023 May 26. PMID: 37245717.

² Kumar S, Metz DC, Ellenberg S, Kaplan DE, Goldberg DS. Risk Factors and Incidence of Gastric Cancer After Detection of Helicobacter pylori Infection: A Large Cohort Study. Gastroenterology. 2020 Feb;158(3):527-536.e7. doi: 10.1053/j.gastro.2019.10.019. Epub 2019 Oct 22. PMID: 31654635; PMCID: PMC7010558.

³ Li D, Jiang SF, Lei NY, Shah SC, Corley DA. Effect of Helicobacter pylori Eradication Therapy on the Incidence of Noncardia Gastric Adenocarcinoma in a Large Diverse Population in the United States. Gastroenterology. 2023 Aug;165(2):391-401.e2. doi: 10.1053/j.gastro.2023.04.026. Epub 2023 May 2. PMID: 37142201.

GI Cancers Alliance
Ohyouresotough
No Stomach for Cancer
Port Protect
Project Periwinkle
Raymond Foundation
Stomach Cancer Task Force
Stupid Strong
Triage Cancer
United Way of Broward County