Dear Senator (insert name),

As your constituent, an advocate for people with congenital heart disease (CHD), and strong supporter of the Department of Defense (DoD) medical research program, I am writing to request that you support the Durbin-Blunt Amendment to S. 1519, the fiscal year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act. This amendment will eliminate the provisions of the NDAA that will undermine the DoD’s medical research program and ensure that the critical, cutting-edge research, including that on congenital heart disease (CHD), will continue.

CHDs are the most common class of birth defects and the leading cause of birth defect-related infant mortality. Nearly 1 in 100 babies are born with a CHD and more than five percent will not live to see their first birthday. Even those who receive successful intervention are not cured. Children and adults born with CHD require ongoing, costly, specialized cardiac care, and face a lifelong risk of permanent disability and premature death. As a result, healthcare utilization among the CHD population is significantly higher, and health care costs are estimated to be 10 to 20 times greater for this community than the general population.

[We recommend that you enter a brief summary of your experience with CHD here]

The DoD medical research on CHD directly impacts the health and lives of the U.S. military, veterans and their families. Research funded by this program found a higher prevalence of CHD among infants born in Gulf War veteran families. Further research in this area will benefit the children in military families and all American families who have been affected by CHD.

Please support the Durbin-Blunt Amendment to S. 1619. Given the high cost of CHD, the burden they place on affected individuals and their families, and the potential that CHD may be more prevalent among military families, Congress should be supporting this important research, not impeding it.

Sincerely,