



March 14, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

With the federal government being the largest purchaser of health care—more than \$1 trillion per year and rising—it has a responsibility to fund research that determines how to make care as effective, efficient, affordable, equitable, and safe as possible. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is the only federal agency with the sole purpose of generating and disseminating such evidence. The health services research, quality improvement protocols, datasets, and tools supported by AHRQ are used in hospitals, medical centers, physician practices, and public health departments in communities across the nation to improve the quality, access, and value of the health care system.

As you draft the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations legislation for fiscal year (FY) 2017, **the undersigned members of the Friends of AHRQ respectfully request \$364 million in budget authority—consistent with the president’s discretionary funding request and FY 2015 level.**

The Friends of AHRQ thank the subcommittee for recognizing that AHRQ plays a critical role in the research continuum—helping patients get the most from new discoveries in basic and clinical research by improving health care delivery. Your stewardship recognizes that indeed, AHRQ is building upon and extending the work of its public and nongovernmental partners to ensure patients get the right care at the right time, every time. More specifically:

- **AHRQ helps providers help patients.** Americans want to take personal responsibility for their health, and they rely on their doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other health care providers for guidance in making difficult choices. AHRQ-supported research generates valuable evidence to help providers help patients make the right health care decisions for themselves and their loved ones. For example, AHRQ will soon award a series of three-year research grants to advance implementation of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder in primary care practices in rural areas of the United States. In addition to expanding access to this evidence-based therapy in underserved communities, these research studies will discover and test solutions to overcoming known barriers to implementation of MAT in primary care and create training and implementation resources to support future efforts to expand access to MAT.

- **AHRQ keeps patients safe.** The science funded by AHRQ ensures patients receive high quality, appropriate care every time they walk through the hospital, clinic, and medical office doors. AHRQ’s research provides the basis for protocols that prevent medical errors and reduce hospital-acquired infections (HAI), and improve patient experiences and outcomes. In just one example, AHRQ’s evidence-based Comprehensive Unit-based Safety Program to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections (CUSP)—first applied on a large scale in 2003 across more than 100 ICUs across Michigan—saved more than 1,500 lives and nearly \$200 million in the program’s first 18 months. The protocols have since been expanded to hospitals in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico to continue the national implementation of this approach for reducing HAIs.
- **AHRQ makes the business case for high quality care.** AHRQ helps health care providers – from private practice physicians to large hospital systems – understand how to deliver the best care most efficiently. For example, AHRQ maintains the National Quality Measurement Clearinghouse (NQMC) to provide health care providers, health plans, delivery systems, and others with an accessible resource for quality measures and a one-stop-shop for benchmarks on providing more safe, effective and timely care. The breadth of evidence available from AHRQ empowers health care providers to understand not just how they compare to their peers, but also how to improve their performance to be more competitive.

The Friends of AHRQ appreciate that competing priorities abound and resources are increasingly scarce, and we recognize the importance of investing federal funds wisely. We urge you to restore the \$30 million cut AHRQ sustained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 and provide the agency \$364 million in FY 2017, because it isn’t enough to **develop** cures. Understanding how to most effectively and efficiently **deliver** cures to patients through health services research is a critical component on the health research continuum, and one that has implications for health care quality, cost, access and ultimately patient outcomes.

We thank you for your consideration of our request and look forward to helping you preserve the agency’s unique role in generating evidence on the quality of health care and ensuring the evidence is used in practice. For more information, including a copy of our report, please contact Lindsey Horan at 202.292.6718 or lindsey.horan@academyhealth.org.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Academy of Radiology Research
AcademyHealth
Adult Congenital Heart Association
Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Clinical Chemistry
American Association for Dental Research

American Association for Physician Leadership
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Neuromuscular and Electrodiagnostic Medicine
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Association of Public Health Dentistry
American Association on Health and Disability
American Board of Medical Specialties
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Cardiology
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American College of Rheumatology
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Gastroenterological Association
American Heart Association
American Hospital Association
American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA)
American Medical Student Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Optometric Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Pediatric Society
American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Nutrition
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Statistical Association
American Telemedicine Association
American Thoracic Society
Association for Clinical and Translational Science
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of Departments of Family Medicine
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of Population Centers

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of University Radiologists (AUR)
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Baylor Scott & White
BJC HealthCare
Boston University School of Public Health
Brown University
California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals
Cedars-Sinai
Center for Healthcare Organizational and Innovation Research (CHOI Uc-Berkeley school of Public Health)
Chron's and Colitis Foundation of America
Coalition for Clinical and Translational Science
Coalition for Health Funding
Coalition for Imaging and Bioengineering Research
Columbia University Medical Center
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)
Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals
Connecticut Certification Board
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Division of Health Policy and Management, University of Minnesota
ECRI Institute
Emory University
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Fight Colorectal Cancer
GBS|CIDP Foundation International
Global Healthy Living Foundation
Group Health Cooperative
Guidelines International Network, North America Community Steering Group
Harvard University
Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS)
Healthy Teen Network
HIV Medicine Association
Illinois Alcohol and Drug Dependence Association
International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
Johns Hopkins University
Kaiser Permanente
Lakeshore Foundation
March of Dimes
Mayo Clinic
Medica Research Institute
Michigan State University
Minnesota Population Center (MPC)
Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine

NAPHSIS
NASTAD (National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors)
National Alopecia Areata Foundation
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Athletic Trainers' Association
National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care
National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA)
National Hispanic Medical Association
National League for Nursing
National Partnership for Women & Families
North American Primary Care Research Group
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA)
NYU Langone Medical Center
Oncology Nursing Society
Oregon Health & Science University
Palo Alto Medical Foundation Research Institute
Pediatric Policy Council
Penn Medicine
Penn State University
Physician Assistant Education Association
Population Association of America
Public Health Institute
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Research!America
RTI International
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
Scleroderma Foundation
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Medical Decision Making
Society for Pediatric Research
Society for Public Health Education
Society for Women's Health Research
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Hospital Medicine
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine
Summa Health
The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
The Clinical Research Forum
The Integrated Health Interview Series (IHIS)
The Joint Commission
The Leapfrog Group
The Marfan Foundation
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
Trinity Health-New England
Trust for America's Health

University of California, Davis
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus
University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences System
University of Michigan
University of Missouri System
University of Nebraska Medical Center
University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
University of Rochester
University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine
University of South Florida Health
University of Washington
UPMC Community Provider Services
UTHealth - The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
Vanderbilt University
Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center
Washington University in St. Louis
Weill Cornell Medicine
Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease