

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 23, 2017

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 Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you and your colleagues begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (L-HHS) appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you fund the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) at \$364 million. AHRQ is an essential element of the nation's health care ecosystem, charged with improving the quality and delivery of health care.

Discovering cures to diseases is critical to patients, providers, and our communities. However, understanding how to most effectively deliver those cures to patients through health services requires research that is equally critical. AHRQ is the only federal agency whose sole focus is to generate reliable research and tools on how to deliver the highest quality care, at the greatest value, with the best outcomes to all patients. It is the only agency that funds research on the "real-world" patient—the one who doesn't have diabetes alone, for example, but also has cardiovascular disease and renal disease; or the patient who has cancer, as well as heart disease. AHRQ-funded research allows us to understand where waste, inefficiencies, and gaps exist within the health care system, and allows patients, payers, providers, and others to harness American innovation and make the health care system safer, more efficient, and more effective.

Today, AHRQ is helping doctors in rural communities fight the opioid epidemic by developing and testing effective medication assisted therapy protocols that could save thousands of lives, something of particular importance as we fight the current opioid epidemic. AHRQ is also providing primary care clinicians and their patients with tools to make evidence-based decisions about which medications to use for treating alcohol use disorder. AHRQ is the federal agency singularly responsible for reducing the nearly 100,000 deaths in the United States each year associated with medical errors and is supporting researchers who continue to search for ways improve patient safety and outcomes.

Restoring AHRQ's budget to the FY 2015 level of \$364 million will allow for reinvestment in critical initiatives that were terminated as a result of the agency's \$30 million cut

in FY 2016. Among those is the agency's research portfolio to optimize care for America's nearly 60 million patients living with multiple chronic conditions. By 2020, an estimated eighty-one million people will have multiple chronic conditions and the costs of their care will consume 80 percent of publicly funded health insurance programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. This AHRQ research portfolio would have provided critical information on how to most successfully and cost efficiently treat these patients.

Health services research shows that as much as one-third of the more than \$3 trillion our nation spends on health care each year is waste—care that is inappropriate, ineffective, or harmful. Every dollar we invest in generating evidence to eliminate that waste is a sound fiscal investment. Funding AHRQ will help to ensure that our health care system becomes the most efficient one in the world for both patients and taxpayers. We urge you to make AHRQ, and its critical research, a priority in FY 2018.

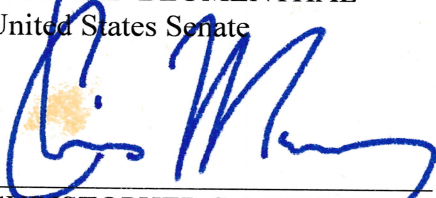
Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senate



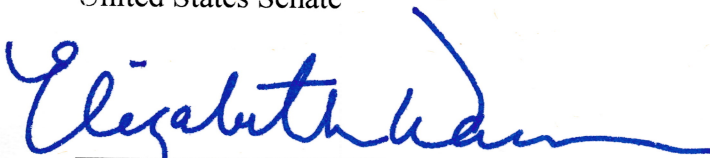
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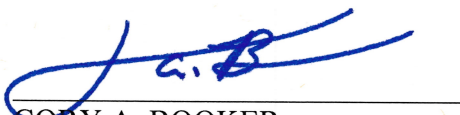
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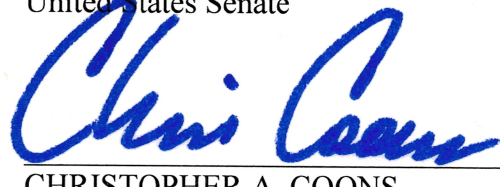
  
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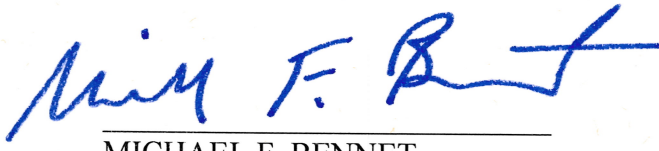
  
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