



March 27, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education and  
Related Agencies

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education and  
Related Agencies

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As the largest purchaser of health care—more than \$1 trillion per year and rising—the federal government has an enormous stake in spending each health dollar wisely. Patients deserve health care that works for them, and taxpayers deserve smart spending. That means care delivered at the right time, in the right setting, by the right professional. It means that patients receive cutting-edge care, whether that patient lives in South Carolina, South Dakota, or south Jersey – and it means no patient is harmed by the care they receive due to a preventable medical error. It’s a tall order and a tough job, but the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) helps achieve such success day in and day out. AHRQ doesn’t attract great attention to itself; it’s a workhorse. But AHRQ saves money, and AHRQ saves lives.

As you draft the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation for fiscal year (FY) 2019, the **142 undersigned members of the Friends of AHRQ respectfully request \$454 million in budget authority**, which is consistent with the FY 2010 level adjusted for inflation. This funding level will allow AHRQ to rebuild portfolios terminated after the last seven years of cuts, and will help the agency avoid a funding cliff that will result in more than a 25 percent cut to its program level budget when the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research (PCOR) Trust Fund is at risk of expiring at the end of FY 2019.

AHRQ funds the research needed to change what’s wrong and share what’s right in day-to-day health care delivery. Universities and other research institutes throughout the nation conduct this critical research. AHRQ also generates data to monitor the health care landscape and ensures the pipeline of new medical findings reaches health care providers and patients, regardless of where they work and live, and provides them with the tools and training they need to use those findings every day in the care of patients.

An example of AHRQ’s successful work includes research grants to ensure rural primary care practices are equipped to respond to the opioid crisis. An explosion in the incidence of opioid addiction and overdoses, particularly in rural areas of the country, has elevated this issue to crisis-level in the United States. Primary care practices are often the first line of defense against this and other substance use disorders. In addition, AHRQ is the federal agency singularly responsible for reducing the nearly 100,000 deaths in the United States each year associated with medical errors. AHRQ’s innovative Comprehensive Unit-based Safety Program to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections—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. This project has since been expanded to hospitals in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

The vast majority of federally funded research focuses on one specific disease, organ system, cellular or chemical process. AHRQ is the only federal agency that funds research on the “real-life” 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. In 2000, an estimated 60 million Americans had such multiple chronic conditions. By 2020, an estimated 81 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. Unfortunately, the \$30 million cut AHRQ sustained in FY 2016 resulted in the termination of the agency’s portfolio aimed at optimizing care for patients with multiple chronic conditions. Restoring AHRQ’s budget to the FY 2010 level of \$454 million will support research to supply providers with the tools they need to best serve these patients.

The Friends of AHRQ recognize the importance of investing federal funds strategically. We strongly believe that AHRQ more than earns a place among your appropriations priorities, and urge you to provide the agency \$454 million in budget authority in FY 2019. Doing so would signal your continued commitment not just to produce discoveries, but to produce science that translates medical progress into better care for patients *today*. Absent any clear indication that the PCOR Trust Fund will be reauthorized between now and its scheduled expiration September 30, 2019, a level of \$454 million in budget authority will allow AHRQ to avoid a devastating budget cut of more than one-quarter, maintain its current program level budget, and sustain critical research and training activities currently supported by the PCOR Trust Fund.

Thank you for considering our recommendation. For more information, including a copy of our report on AHRQ’s contributions to improved health and health care over the years, please contact Kristin Rosengren at 202.292.6700 or [kristin.rosengren@academyhealth.org](mailto:kristin.rosengren@academyhealth.org).

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association  
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
AcademyHealth  
Alliance for Aging Research  
AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine  
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology  
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN)  
American Academy of Dermatology Association  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Nursing  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Dental Research  
American Association for the Study of Liver Disease  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association of Neuromuscular & Electrodiagnostic Medicine  
American Association of Nurse Assessment Coordination (AANAC)

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 Clinical Pharmacy  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Rheumatology  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Health Information Management Association  
American Health Quality Association  
American Heart Association  
American Liver Foundation  
American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA)  
American Nephrology Nurses Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Optometric Association  
American Organization of Nurse Executives  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Pediatric Society  
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 Thoracic Society  
America's Essential Hospitals  
Association for Clinical and Translational Science  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Departments of Family Medicine  
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of University Radiologists  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
Brown University School of Public Health

Clinical Research Forum  
Coalition for Clinical and Translational Science  
Coalition for Health Funding  
Columbia University Irving Medical Center  
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Digestive Disease National Coalition  
Doctor Evidence  
Duke University Health System  
Dystonia Advocacy Network  
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation  
ECRI Institute  
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences  
Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research  
GBS|CIDP Foundation  
Global Healthy Living Foundation  
Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS)  
Healthy Teen Network  
Heart Rhythm Society  
HIV Medicine Association  
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society  
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium  
International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis  
International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders  
Interstitial Cystitis Association  
Kaiser Permanente  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association  
Lymphatic Education & Research Network  
March of Dimes  
Marshfield Clinic Health System  
METAvivor  
National Alopecia Areata Foundation  
National Athletic Trainers' Association  
National Coalition on Health Care  
National Committee for Quality Assurance  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
NephCure Kidney International  
North American Primary Care Research Group  
Northern Illinois University  
Oregon Health and Science University

Penn State University  
Premier Healthcare Alliance  
Public Health Institute  
Pulmonary Hypertension Association  
Research!America  
Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation  
RTI International  
Scleroderma Foundation  
Sleep Research Society  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Society for Medical Decision Making  
Society for Participatory Medicine  
Society for Pediatric Research  
Society for Public Health Education  
Society of General Internal Medicine  
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine  
The Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
The Joint Commission  
The Leapfrog Group  
The Marfan Foundation  
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America  
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons  
Trust for America's Health  
Tulane University, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Department of Global Health  
Management and Policy  
U.S. Hereditary Angioedema Association  
U.S. Pain Foundation, Inc.  
UC-Berkeley  
UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, Department of Health Policy and Management  
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus  
University of Michigan – Institute for Healthcare Policy & Innovation  
University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center  
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine  
University of Southern Maine Muskie School of Public Service  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
UPMC Community Provider Services  
UTHealth | The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston  
Vanderbilt University Medical Center  
Weill Cornell Medicine  
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease