



March 15, 2007

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6024

The Honorable James T. Walsh
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh:

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is the lead federal agency charged with supporting research to improve healthcare quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors, eliminate health care disparities, and broaden access to essential services. Yet precarious funding levels threaten the agency's ability to achieve this important mission, at a time when health care costs are at an all time high. To address this problem, the Friends of AHRQ recommends an FY 2008 funding level of \$350 million, an increase of \$31 million over FY 2007.

AHRQ provides the high quality, unbiased information needed to make educated decisions about our health care. Through this evidence base, AHRQ's research helps improve quality, patient safety, and the overall efficiency of our health care system. For example, AHRQ's *National Healthcare Disparities Report* tracks disparities in both quality of and access to health care in the United States and monitors the nation's annual progress toward eliminating these disparities. Yet since FY 2002, the agency's budget has risen just 6.7 percent (\$20 million). In addition, the agency has lost nearly \$20 million in purchasing power since FY 2005 due to a combination of flat funding from Congress and inflation.

These funding shortfalls have made it difficult for AHRQ's important programs to reach their full potential. Significant investments have already been made in initiatives to expedite the adoption of health information technology, as well as research and dissemination programs to reduce medical errors and improve patient safety. Without additional resources these initiatives will be curtailed, undermining AHRQ's core mission (please see attachment for more details).

The Friends of AHRQ recommends an FY 2008 budget of at least \$350 million for the agency, a \$31 million increase over FY 2007 funding. With this increase—just 0.0015 percent of the \$2 trillion Americans spend annually on health care—AHRQ can continue and restore its critical safety, quality, and efficiency initiatives to help us spend our health care dollars more wisely.

Friends of AHRQ
March 15, 2007
Page 2

The Friends of AHRQ is a group of organizations that want to ensure the agency's continued vital role in improving our nation's health. For more information, contact Emily Rowe at 202.292.6743 or emily.rowe@academyhealth.org.

Sincerely,

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American Osteopathic Association
American Pediatric Society
American Pharmacists Association
American Psychiatric Association
Arthritis Foundation
Association of American Medical Colleges
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Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America
Coalition for Health Funding
Coalition for Health Services Research
Gundersen Lutheran Health System
Marshfield Clinic
Matria Healthcare, Inc.
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National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Business Coalition on Health
National Business Group on Health

Friends of AHRQ
March 15, 2007
Page 3

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Society for Adolescent Medicine
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Hospital Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
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The Joint Commission
The Mount Sinai Medical Center
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
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