



March 16, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health  
and Human Services, Education and Related  
Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly revealed stress fractures in the US healthcare system and that our nation's goals of a system that ensures access to high quality healthcare for all is falling far short of its potential. We have seen the deep racial, ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic health disparities and inequities both within and beyond healthcare as people of color have disproportionately contracted COVID-19, are suffering worse outcomes, having less access to diagnostics, vaccinations, treatments, and are dying at higher rates. At the same time, the federal government, states, localities, and health providers have taken dramatic actions to respond to the pandemic and other existing healthcare challenges, and they are being forced to do so without sufficient research and evaluations on the impacts of their decisions.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) supports research to improve health care quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors, and broaden access to essential services. As the lead federal agency for funding health services research (HSR) and primary care research (PCR), AHRQ is the bridge between cures and care, and ensures that Americans get the best health care at the best value. The RAND Corporation released a [report](#) in 2020 as called for by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, which identified AHRQ as “the only agency that has statutory authorizations to generate HSR and be the home for federal PCR, and the unique focus of its research portfolio on systems-based outcomes (e.g., making health care safer, higher quality, more accessible, equitable, and affordable) and approaches to implementing improvement across health care settings and populations in the United States.” AHRQ offers valuable insights on every facet of the health care system. For example, the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine 2021 [report](#) on *Implementing High Quality Primary Care* highlighted the value of and need for federal investments in AHRQ through the National Center for Excellence in Primary Care Research.

While the vast majority of federally funded research focuses on one specific disease or organ system, AHRQ is the only federal agency that funds research at universities and other research institutions throughout the nation on health systems—the “real-life” patient who has complex comorbidities, the interoperability of different technological advances, and the interactions and intersections of health care providers. For example, some recent failures in the COVID-19 response can be addressed with more attention to the root causes of, and strategies for, addressing barriers to healthcare access, including what can be done in primary care to address health equity, and more broadly what are the patient-oriented primary care quality measures that would facilitate more engaged patient care.

As the lead agency for health services research and primary care research, AHRQ provides the resources that policymakers, health system leaders, medical providers, and patients need to determine the



effectiveness of health systems delivery. In order to deliver better outcomes, we need to be able to differentiate which healthcare interventions work, for whom they work, and how to implement them, and HSR, PCR, and AHRQ are the process through which we develop that knowledge. For example, the effectiveness of a new vaccine is diminished if we do not have a robust and trustworthy delivery system that provides equitable access regardless of race, ethnicity, or income, and addressing questions like this is where AHRQ has a proven track record. Funding HSR and PCR through AHRQ is a key part of how we will best recover from COVID-19, prepare for the next pandemic, and address failures in the healthcare system that Americans continue to face.

The benefits of investing in health services research through AHRQ transcend the pandemic and provide benefits in saved lives, better value care, and improved patient outcomes across the health system. For example, the implementation of just one AHRQ-funded [study](#) on reducing hospital acquired conditions prevented an estimated 20,500 hospital deaths and saved \$7.7 billion in health care costs from 2014 to 2017. To maximize the translation of research findings across the public health and health care continuum to improved patient care and keep pace with the rapidly evolving and changing health care landscape, additional investments in AHRQ are needed.

For these reasons, as you draft the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2023, the **135** undersigned members of the Friends of AHRQ respectfully **request no less than \$500 million in funding for the Agency for Healthcare and Research and Quality (AHRQ)**. This request reflects an inflation adjustment from FY10 and the demonstrated need to expand and accelerate HSR investments to inform decision-making on the health care system as it recovers from the pandemic.

AHRQ is the federal vehicle for studying and improving the United States healthcare system, and it needs the resources to meet its mission and this moment. Through this appropriation level, AHRQ will be better able to fund the “last mile” of research from cure to care.

Thank you for your support of AHRQ and health services research. For more information, please contact Josh Caplan at [Josh.Caplan@AcademyHealth.org](mailto:Josh.Caplan@AcademyHealth.org).

Sincerely,

ABIM Foundation  
Academic Pediatric Association  
Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses  
AcademyHealth  
ACCP  
Alliance for Aging Research  
Altarum  
AMDA - The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine  
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology  
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nurses (AAACN)  
American Academy of Dermatology Association  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine  
American Academy of Neurology  
American Academy of Nursing

American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Clinical Chemistry  
American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research  
American Association for Physician Leadership  
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association of Occupation Health Nurses  
American Association of Public Health Dentistry  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Chiropractic Association  
American College of Cardiology  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Rheumatology  
American Health Information Management Association  
American Health Quality Association  
American Heart Association  
American Medical Association  
American Medical Student Association  
American Nephrology Nurses Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Organization for Nursing Leadership  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Pediatric Society  
American Physical Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Society for Nutrition  
American Society for Transplantation and Cellular Therapy  
American Society of Hematology  
American Society of Nephrology  
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology  
American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
American Statistical Association  
American Thoracic Society  
American Urological Association  
Arbor Research Collaborative for Health  
Association for Clinical and Translational Science  
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
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 Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs



Association of Population Centers  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Carnegie Mellon University  
Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine  
Cedars-Sinai  
Clinical Research Forum  
Coalition for Clinical and Translational Science  
Columbia University Irving Medical Center  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council of Medical Specialty Societies  
Duke Health  
EBQ Consulting, LLC  
ECRI  
Epilepsy Foundation  
Federation of American Hospitals  
Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS)  
Healthy Teen Network  
Heart Failure Society of America  
Heart Rhythm Society  
Johns Hopkins Health System  
Kaiser Permanente  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Lown Institute  
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.  
March of Dimes  
Marshfield Clinic Health System  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Athletic Trainers' Association  
National Black Nurses Association  
National Eczema Association  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National League for Nursing  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Organization of Health Data Organizations  
North American Primary Care Research Group  
Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs  
Oncology Nursing Society  
Oregon Health & Science University  
Pediatric Policy Council  
Penn State Center for Health Care Policy Research  
Population Association of America  
Public Health Institute  
Research!America  
Results for America  
RTI International  
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine



Society for Participatory Medicine  
Society for Pediatric Research  
Society for Public Health Education  
Society for Women's Health Research  
Society of Chairs of Academic Radiology Departments  
Society of General Internal Medicine  
Society of Hospital Medicine  
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine  
Society to Improve Diagnosis in Medicine  
Spina Bifida Association  
The American College of Preventive Medicine  
The Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research  
The Hilltop Institute at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)  
The Leapfrog Group  
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons  
United Ostomy Associations of America  
University of Michigan Institute for Healthcare Policy & Innovation  
University of Oregon  
University of Rochester  
University of Washington  
UTHealth Houston  
Vanderbilt University Medical Center  
Washington State University  
Weill Cornell Medicine