



September 12, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Pelosi and Minority Leader Reid:

As the House and Senate work to finalize legislation that will fund the federal government for the 2017 fiscal year, the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and the 124,900 family physicians and medical students we represent, urge you to pass a short-term continuing resolution or “CR” for FY 2017 unencumbered by controversial policy riders. While a clean CR will allow sufficient time to finalize the legislation needed to support the many federal programs that are important to family physicians and our patients, we also urgently recommend that you work to enact Zika funding this month.

The AAFP appreciates and encourages the bipartisan cooperation on key federal programs that support the efforts of our members to improve people’s lives and our health care system in significant ways. We are grateful for this opportunity to highlight several of our priorities for the coming fiscal year.

Primary Care Research – The AAFP urges you to prevent cuts to the current spending level for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and provide the agency at least \$334 million in budget authority. AHRQ is the sole federal agency charged with producing research to support clinical decision making, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors and improve health care quality and access. AHRQ provides the critical evidence reviews needed to answer questions on the common acute, chronic, and co-morbid conditions that family physicians encounter in their practices on a daily basis. In addition, AHRQ-supported research continues to promote quality improvements used in physician practices, hospitals, medical centers, and public health departments in communities across the nation to improve patient safety, access, and value in the health care system.

Family Physician Workforce – The *Public Health Service Act* Title VII, §747 grants continue to be vital to family medicine education, training and faculty development. The Primary Care Training & Enhancement (PCTE) program administered by the Health Resources and Services

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Administration (HRSA) strengthens medical education for all primary care physicians and physician assistants to improve the quantity, quality, distribution, and diversity of the primary care workforce. We thank the House and Senate Committees for providing funding of \$38.924 million which is consistent with the current fiscal year.

Prescription Drug Abuse – The AAFP is deeply concerned that the abuse of heroin and prescription opioid painkillers is having a devastating effect on public health and safety in our communities. With the passage of the *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA)*, Congress took a meaningful first step toward attacking the opioid crisis. We ask that you invest in the programs authorized and reauthorized in CARA to support prevention, treatment, and recovery services. In particular, we urge you to provide funds needed for state grants to implement prescription drug monitoring programs and the interstate exchange of registry information as called for under the *National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting (NASPER) Act* as well as programs to promote greater access to naloxone.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services – The passage of the *Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA)* repealed the flawed sustainable growth rate formula and completely reforms the framework for rewarding physicians for providing higher quality care. We believe that MACRA will strengthen primary care and make primary care a strong foundation for payment and delivery reform for physician services under Medicare. However, without careful implementation of MACRA, physicians practicing in communities across the country could face overly complex and burdensome administrative requirements that will hinder patient care. The AAFP is deeply concerned about the proposed cuts to program management and strongly urges Congress to work with CMS and the next Administration to ensure the successful implementation of MACRA.

Thank you for this opportunity to highlight a few of our priorities and why we view them as important to our health care system. Please contact Teresa Baker, Senior Government Relations Representative, at tbaker@aafp.org or (202) 232-9033 for additional information on AAFP policies and priorities.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Wergin, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair

cc: The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
The Honorable Steve Scalise
The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The Honorable John Cornyn
The Honorable Richard Durbin
The Honorable Harold Rogers
The Honorable Nita Lowey
The Honorable Thad Cochran
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
The Honorable Tom Cole
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
The Honorable Roy Blunt
The Honorable Patty Murray