



March 23, 2015

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

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

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is the only federal agency with the sole purpose of generating evidence to make health care safer, higher quality, and more accessible, equitable and affordable. AHRQ is also working to ensure such evidence is understood and used by patients, health care providers, public health professionals, hospitals, and public and private payers. As such, AHRQ funds health services research and health care improvement programs in universities, medical centers, research institutions, and medical practices across the nation.

To expand AHRQ's capacity to generate this important science, the undersigned members of the Friends of AHRQ recommend you provide the agency \$375 million in budget authority in fiscal year (FY) 2016.

The Friends of AHRQ thank the Subcommittee for sustaining AHRQ's budget at a time when competing priorities abound and resources are increasingly scarce. We particularly applaud your recent efforts to stabilize the agency's budget by providing AHRQ budget authority in FY 2015 following more than a decade of Public Health Service evaluation transfer or "tap" funding. Your stewardship recognizes that AHRQ plays a critical role in the research continuum—helping patients get the most from new discoveries in basic and clinical research by improving health care delivery. Indeed, AHRQ is building upon and extending the work of its public and nongovernmental partners to ensure patients get the right care at the right time, every time.

In our 2014 report, *AHRQ: 15 Years of Transforming Care and Improving Health*, we celebrated the agency's contributions to improved health and health care by highlighting the experiences of producers and users of AHRQ-funded evidence and tools. Some examples from our report and other sources show that:

- **AHRQ helps providers help patients.** Americans want to take personal responsibility for their health, and they rely on their doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other health care providers for guidance in making difficult choices. AHRQ's research generates valuable evidence to help providers help patients make the right health care decisions for themselves and their loved ones. For example, the American College of Physicians used AHRQ-funded research to inform

their recommendations for treatment of type 2 diabetes. These evidence-informed recommendations give physicians a foundation for describing what the best care looks like, so patients can determine what the right care might be for them.

- **AHRQ keeps patients safe.** The science funded by AHRQ ensures patients receive high quality, appropriate care every time they walk through the hospital, clinic, and medical office doors. AHRQ's research provides the basis for protocols that prevent medical errors and reduce hospital-acquired infections (HAI), and improve patient experiences and outcomes. In just one example, AHRQ's evidence-based Comprehensive Unit-based Safety Program to Prevent Healthcare-Associated Infections (CUSP)—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. The protocols have since been expanded to hospitals in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico to continue the national implementation of this approach for reducing HAIs.
- **AHRQ makes the business case for high quality care.** AHRQ helps health care providers – from private practice physicians to large hospital systems – understand how to deliver the best care most efficiently. For example, AHRQ maintains the National Quality Measurement Clearinghouse (NQMC) to provide health care providers, health plans, delivery systems, and others with an accessible resource for quality measures and a one-stop-shop for benchmarks on providing more safe, effective and timely care. The breadth of evidence available from AHRQ empowers health care providers to understand not just how they compare to their peers, but also how to improve their performance to be more competitive.

It isn't enough to **develop** cures. Understanding how to most effectively and efficiently **deliver** cures to patients through health services research is a critical component on the health research continuum, and one that has implications for health care quality, cost, access and ultimately patient outcomes. AHRQ's unique role is generating such evidence on the safety and quality of health care and assuring the evidence is used in practice.

We thank you for your consideration of our request and look forward to helping you preserve the agency's continued vital role in improving our nation's health. For more information, including a copy of our report, please contact Lindsey Horan at 202.292.6718 or lindsey.horan@academyhealth.org.

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth
Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Clinical Chemistry
American Association for Dental Research
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
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