November 9, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chair  
United States Senate  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair  
United States House of Representative  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Vice Chairman  
United States Senate  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
United States House of Representative Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Leahy, Chairwoman DeLauro, Vice Chairman Shelby, and Ranking Member Granger:

The Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM) appreciates your steadfast leadership and continued efforts to finalize the fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriations bills before the end of the calendar year. As you develop a FY 2023 omnibus, we urge you to provide full and robust funding for primary care research and training. Specifically, we urge you to provide increased funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Agency for Healthcare and Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the Title VII health professions training programs administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

SGIM is a member-based medical association of more than 3,300 of the world’s leading academic general internists, who are dedicated to improving the access to care for all populations, eliminating health care disparities, and enhancing medical education. Our members are committed to ensuring patients have equitable and affordable access to the highest quality of care possible.

Insufficient funding for research at the NIH has a wide-ranging impact on our nation’s health and capacity for medical innovation. For the NIH to continue funding the best, peer-reviewed biomedical, behavioral and translational research, increased funding is necessary. For these reasons, we urge Congress to adopt the House Appropriations Committee approved funding level of $47.4 billion, which would represent an increase of $2 billion over the FY 2022 funding level. While this is less than the $49.048 billion SGIM originally requested, we believe that it will provide for continued robust, sustainable investment in the research agency. Should the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health be funded as part of NIH, SGIM also recommends that funding be provided in addition to that $47.4 billion to ensure funding for the new entity supplement, not supplant, funding for the 27 Institutes and Centers and the Office of the Director.
Furthermore, SGIM recommends no less than $385.4 million in funding, the Senate Labor-HHS draft level, for the AHRQ. The current research need is greater than what can be addressed at this funding level but represents continued investment in AHRQ, which is necessary for the agency to fulfill its mission to produce evidence to make health care safer, higher quality, more accessible, equitable, and affordable for all.

Moreover, SGIM is deeply concerned about primary care workforce shortages, as the American Association of Medical Colleges estimates a primary care physician shortage of between 17,800 and 48,000 by 2034.¹ SGIM believes this estimate may be optimistic as it does not account for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which we suspect has had an adverse impact on medical students and the health care workforce as a whole. As we grapple with the worsening workforce shortages, SGIM reinforces that true health care system transformation cannot be achieved without a primary care workforce that reflects the diversity of the population. Therefore, SGIM recommends increased investment in the HRSA Title VII health professions programs: $54.924 million for the Primary care Training and Enhancement Program; $30.422 million for the Centers of Excellence; and $18.5 million for the Health Careers Opportunity Program. Bold investments in these programs are required to improve the supply, distribution, and diversity of the primary care workforce and train the next generation of health professionals to meet our nation’s demanding health care needs.

Thank you again for your leadership and working to finalize FY 2023 appropriations to provide necessary investments for these critical programs. If you have questions, or if our society can be of further assistance, please contact Erika Miller at emiller@dc-crd.com.

Sincerely,

LeRoi Hicks, MD, MPH
President, Society of General internal Medicine

cc: The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, House Minority Leader

¹https://www.aamc.org/media/54681/download?attachment