

July 21, 2023

United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Capitol, Room S-128,
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Collins, and Ranking Member Capito:

We write to the Senate Appropriation Committee and the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies to express our support for including an increase in funding for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) in its staffing and administrative support for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) as part of the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bill.

The USPSTF plays a vital role in ensuring patient access to life-saving clinical preventive services. While the USPSTF has made recommendations on which preventive services Americans should utilize since the 1980s, the USPSTF's role shifted from a scientific advisory board to one whose decisions impact federal benefit and coverage requirements in 2010. Despite this expanded role, the USPSTF's budget has remained essentially flat over the last decade.

While the USPSTF does an admirable job at reviewing the existing complex scientific literature and making thorough and educated recommendations, the rising costs of reviews and stagnant staffing levels prevent the USPSTF from quickly updating its recommendations. Because of these funding limitations, the USPSTF has limited the number of recommendations it finalizes each year.

There are also concerns about the USPSTF's current approach to engaging the stakeholder community and how it incorporates evidence reflecting systemic health inequities into its recommendations. Scientific discovery is rapidly evolving, making it critical that the USPSTF has the resources, staffing, and processes in place to keep pace with innovation, medical literature, and patient needs.

Last year, both the Senate and House Appropriations Committees included report language in their respective Labor-Health and Human Services-Education appropriations bills expressing concerns about the ability of the USPSTF to keep pace with medical innovation and encouraging the USPSTF to utilize its early topic update process and prioritize review of new screening tools and modalities that have been approved or cleared by the FDA.

In response to these concerns, President Biden's Fiscal Year 2024 budget proposal includes \$18.0 million for AHRQ for its administration of the USPSTF. This represents an increase of more than \$6.5 million over the Fiscal Year 2023 enacted level. An increase of this size would improve the USPSTF's processes, augment staffing, and expedite patient access to critical clinical preventive services. We support the increase in funding and USPSTF's commitment to using the increased funds to develop "revised methods of evidence surveillance, early updates, and 1-2 rapid reviews or living reviews a year to support early updates of the Task Force's recommendations."¹ In addition, we support USPSTF's activities to increase stakeholder engagement and collaboration, enhance transparency, and improve the ongoing scientific review process to ensure recommendations better reflect the most recent medical evidence.

¹ [Budget Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, Fiscal Year 2024 \(ahrq.gov\)](https://www.ahrq.gov/budget-justification-estimates-for-appropriations-committees-fiscal-year-2024)

We stand ready to work with you to ensure that USPSTF is funded for Fiscal Year 2024 at the level recommended by the Biden Administration. We also encourage you to include the report language below to ensure that the additional funding is used effectively:

The Committee would like to reiterate its concern with the ability of the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) to keep pace with medical innovation. In fiscal year 2023, the Committee encouraged the USPSTF to utilize its Early Topic Update process to review a recommendation on an enhanced timeframe upon a showing of new evidence. The Committee also encouraged the USPSTF to prioritize review of any new screening test or preventive medication approved or cleared by the FDA that is a preventive strategy or modality pertaining to but not included in a previous Task Force recommendation. Emerging and innovative medical technologies can further public health for all Americans and address health inequities by increasing access to and compliance with USPSTF recommended screenings. The Committee continues to support the need for the USPSTF to utilize its Early Topic Update process and recommends the budget request for USPSTF, a \$6,500,000 increase over last year's funding level, of which not less than \$3,000,000 of the increase is provided to support these activities.

We appreciate the leadership of you Committee and Subcommittee in ensuring patient access for lifesaving clinical preventive services and thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

AdvaMed
Allergy & Asthma Network
Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for Women's Health & Prevention
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Medical Association
ASPIRa Association, Inc.
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Biomarker Collaborative
Brafbombers
California Life Sciences
Cancer Support Community
Chronic Disease Coalition
Colon Cancer Coalition
Color of Crohn's and Chronic Illness (COCCI)
Colorectal Cancer Alliance
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation
CURE Childhood Cancer
Delfi Diagnostics
Dusty Joy Foundation (LiveLung)
Exon 20 Group
Fight Colorectal Cancer

FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered
Free ME from Lung Cancer
Geneoscopy, Inc.
Global Colon Cancer Association
Go2 for Lung Cancer
Healthcare Leadership Council
HealthHIV
ICAN, International Cancer Advocacy Network
Immune Deficiency Foundation
Invitae Corporation
Laboratory Corporation of America Holdings
Lung Cancer Initiative
Medical Imaging & Technology Alliance
MET Crusaders
National Coalition for LGBTQ Health
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Patient Advocate Foundation
ONE CANCER PLACE
Patient Empowerment Network
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Prostate Network
Renalytix Inc.
Society of General Internal Medicine
The PD-L1 Amplifieds
The White Ribbon Project