



March 15, 2007

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education  
and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6024

The Honorable James T. Walsh  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education  
and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1016 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Walsh:

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is the lead federal agency charged with supporting research to improve healthcare quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors, eliminate health care disparities, and broaden access to essential services. Yet precarious funding levels threaten the agency's ability to achieve this important mission, at a time when health care costs are at an all time high. To address this problem, the Friends of AHRQ recommends an FY 2008 funding level of \$350 million, an increase of \$31 million over FY 2007.

AHRQ provides the high quality, unbiased information needed to make educated decisions about our health care. Through this evidence base, AHRQ's research helps improve quality, patient safety, and the overall efficiency of our health care system. For example, AHRQ's *National Healthcare Disparities Report* tracks disparities in both quality of and access to health care in the United States and monitors the nation's annual progress toward eliminating these disparities. Yet since FY 2002, the agency's budget has risen just 6.7 percent (\$20 million). In addition, the agency has lost nearly \$20 million in purchasing power since FY 2005 due to a combination of flat funding from Congress and inflation.

These funding shortfalls have made it difficult for AHRQ's important programs to reach their full potential. Significant investments have already been made in initiatives to expedite the adoption of health information technology, as well as research and dissemination programs to reduce medical errors and improve patient safety. Without additional resources these initiatives will be curtailed, undermining AHRQ's core mission (please see attachment for more details).

The Friends of AHRQ recommends an FY 2008 budget of at least \$350 million for the agency, a \$31 million increase over FY 2007 funding. With this increase—just 0.0015 percent of the \$2 trillion Americans spend annually on health care—AHRQ can continue and restore its critical safety, quality, and efficiency initiatives to help us spend our health care dollars more wisely.

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The Friends of AHRQ is a group of organizations that want to ensure the agency's continued vital role in improving our nation's health. For more information, contact Emily Rowe at 202.292.6743 or [emily.rowe@academyhealth.org](mailto:emily.rowe@academyhealth.org).

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth  
Advanced Initiatives in Medical Simulation  
Aetna  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Clinical Chemistry  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association for Dental Research  
American College of Clinical Pharmacy  
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American College of Rheumatology  
American Dental Education Association  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Health Planning Association  
American Heart Association  
American Medical Association  
American Medical Informatics Association  
American Optometric Association  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Pediatric Society  
American Pharmacists Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Society of Nephrology  
Arthritis Foundation  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association for Clinical Research Training  
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America  
Coalition for Health Funding  
Coalition for Health Services Research  
Gundersen Lutheran Health System  
Marshfield Clinic  
Matria Healthcare, Inc.  
Medco  
Medical Library Association/Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries

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National Association of Local Boards of Health  
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems  
National Business Coalition on Health  
National Business Group on Health  
RTI International  
Society for Adolescent Medicine  
Society of General Internal Medicine  
Society of Hospital Medicine  
Society for Pediatric Research  
The Dow Chemical Company  
The Joint Commission  
The Mount Sinai Medical Center  
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons  
UnitedHealth Group  
University of Southern Maine, Institute for Health Policy, Muskie School of Public Service  
WellPoint, Inc.