



March 15, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman

The Honorable Arlen Specter, Ranking Member

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

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.

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
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