



June 23, 2015

Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Chairman Cole, Ranking Member Lowey, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I must express our great concern that the Fiscal Year 2016 Department of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill eliminates the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and rescinds funding for the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Trust Fund. While we recognize and appreciate that the bill also provides increased resources for the biomedical research of the National Institutes of Health and the public-health activities of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we are also deeply concerned that the proposed elimination of AHRQ, and prohibition of discretionary funding for any patient-centered outcomes research, will do great damage to the current and future initiatives to improve health care quality, patient safety, and the effectiveness of care provided to patients.

The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 141,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

We strongly believe that AHRQ's activities and related outcomes research provides incomparable and invaluable data that neither can be replicated nor replaced elsewhere in the federal government or the private sector.

AHRQ is the leading public health service agency focused on health care quality. AHRQ's crucial research provides the evidence-based information needed by consumers, clinicians, health plans, purchasers, and policymakers to make informed health-care decisions. The College is acutely dedicated to ensuring AHRQ's vital role in improving the quality of our nation's health and over the years in written testimony to the Subcommittee, has consistently requested that the necessary resources be provided for its activities. Adequate funding allows AHRQ to help providers help patients by making evidence-informed decisions, fund research that serves as the evidence engine for much of the private sector's work to keep patients safe, make the healthcare market place more efficient by providing quality measures to health professionals, and ultimately, help transform health and health care.

The removal of \$100 million of funding for FY2016 from the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Trust Fund will cripple the ability of this independent non-profit entity to continue to facilitate important unbiased medical and healthcare system research regarding the delivery of effective care in an efficient manner—with an emphasis on those factors that are important from the perspective of the patient. Their research, which already includes the funding of over 400 research projects, will help patients and those who care for them make the best care decisions based on reliable information about the potential benefits and harm of various treatment options. This is the type of information ACP members and their patients want and need.

The College is keenly aware of the fiscal pressures facing the Committee and Subcommittee today, but strongly believes the United States must invest robustly in AHRQ and outcomes research—and their proven track record of effectiveness—in order to achieve a high performance health care system and build capacity in our primary care workforce and public health system. **Therefore, ACP respectfully requests that funding for AHRQ and outcomes research be swiftly restored and included as the Committee continues its deliberations of the FY2016 LHHHS Appropriations bill.**

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne J. Riley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and "R".

Wayne J. Riley, MD, MPH, MBA, MACP
President

CC: Members, House Committee on Appropriations, Members, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies