

**Statement for the Record of the American College of Physicians to the
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies**

Re: FY2020 Appropriations, Department of Health and Human Services

April 3, 2019

The American College of Physicians (ACP) is pleased to submit the following statement for the record on its priorities, as funded under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, for Fiscal Year 2020. ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 154,000 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. As the Subcommittee begins deliberations on appropriations for FY2020, ACP is urging funding for the following proven programs to receive appropriations from the Subcommittee:

- Title VII, Section 747, Primary Care Training and Enhancement (PCTE), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), \$71 million;
- National Health Service Corps (NHSC), \$830 million in total program funding;
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), \$460 million;
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Program Operations for Federal Exchanges, \$690 million;
- Continue opioid crisis funding for Comprehensive Drug Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) programs, State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis (Opioid STR) grant program funding, and SUPPORT Act, \$3 billion;

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), \$7.8 billion, Injury Prevention and Control, Research on Prevention of Firearms-related Injuries and Deaths, \$50 million;
- National Institutes of Health (NIH), \$41.6 billion.

The United States is facing a shortage of physicians in key specialties, notably in general internal medicine and family medicine—the specialties that provide primary care to most adult and adolescent patients. Current projections indicate there will be a shortage of 14,800 to 49,300 primary care physicians by 2030. (IHS Inc., prepared for the Association of American Medical Colleges. 2018 Update, The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand: Projections from 2016 to 2030. March, 2018. Accessed at: https://aamc-black.global.ssl.fastly.net/production/media/filer_public/85/d7/85d7b689-f417-4ef0-97fb-ecc129836829/aamc_2018_workforce_projections_update_april_11_2018.pdf). Without critical funding for vital workforce programs, this physician shortage will only grow worse. The health professions' education programs, authorized under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act and administered through HRSA, support the training and education of health care providers to enhance the supply, diversity, and distribution of the health care workforce. Within the Title VII program, we urge the Subcommittee to fund the **Section 747 PCTE** program at **\$71 million**, in order to maintain and expand the pipeline for individuals training in primary care. While the College appreciates the \$10 million increase to the program in FY2018, ACP urges more funding because the Section 747 PCTE program is the only source of federal training dollars available for general internal medicine, general pediatrics, and family medicine. For example, general internists, who have long been at the frontline of patient care, have

benefitted from PCTE training models emphasizing interdisciplinary training that have helped prepare them to work with other health professionals.

The College urges at least **\$830 million** in total program funding for the **NHSC**. For FY2020, the NHSC's funding situation is particularly dire and faces a funding cliff because its mandatory funding is set to expire. In FY2018, the NHSC received \$105 million in discretionary funding to expand and improve access to quality opioid and substance use disorder treatment in underserved areas, in addition to \$310 million in mandatory funds. The Subcommittee continued the \$105 million in discretionary funds in FY2019. The NHSC awards scholarships and loan repayment to health care professionals to help expand the country's primary care workforce and meet the health care needs of underserved communities across the country. In FY2018, with a field strength of over 10,900 primary care clinicians, NHSC members are providing culturally competent care to over 11.5 million patients at over 16,000 NHSC-approved health care sites in urban, rural, and frontier areas. These funds would help maintain NHSC's field strength helping to address the health professionals' workforce shortage and growing maldistribution. There is overwhelming interest and demand for NHSC programs, and with more funding, the NHSC could fill more primary care clinician needs. In FY2016, there were 2,275 applications for the scholarship program, yet only 205 awards were made. There were 7,203 applications for loan repayment and only 3,079 new awards. Accordingly, ACP urges the subcommittee to double the NHSC's overall program funding to \$830 million to meet this need.

AHRQ is the leading public health service agency focused on health care quality. AHRQ's research provides the evidence-based information needed by consumers, clinicians, health plans, purchasers, and policymakers to make informed health care decisions. The College is

dedicated to ensuring AHRQ's vital role in improving the quality of our nation's health and recommends a budget of **\$460 million**, restoring the agency to its FY2010 enacted level adjusted for inflation. This amount will allow AHRQ to help providers help patients by making evidence-informed decisions, to fund research that serves as the evidence engine for much of the private sector's work to keep patients safe, to make the healthcare marketplace more efficient by providing quality measures to health professionals, and, ultimately, to help transform health and health care. With a quarter of the agency's program level budget supported by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Trust Fund, a strong investment in the AHRQ appropriation will be essential to sustain the agency's core activities as the Trust Fund undergoes reauthorization this year.

ACP supports at least **\$690 million** in discretionary funding for federal exchanges within **CMS' Program Operations**, which has been funded at \$2.52 billion the last several fiscal years. This funding would allow the federal government to continue administering the insurance marketplaces, as authorized by the Affordable Care Act, if a state has declined to establish an exchange that meets federal requirements. CMS now manages and operates some or all marketplace activities in over 30 states. If the Subcommittee decides to deny these funds, it will be much more difficult for the federal government to operate and manage a federally-facilitated exchange in those states, raising questions about where and how their residents would obtain and maintain coverage.

ACP supports continuing appropriations for the **CARA of 2016**'s grant programs, continuing the **Opioid STR grant program's** prior year increase, and funding the **SUPPORT Act's** programs in FY2020. The College urges the Subcommittee to continue the **\$3 billion** provided

for FY2018 and FY2019 in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 to help expand proven programs such as evidence-based medication-assisted treatment and first-responder training and access to naloxone for overdose reversal.

The **Center for Disease Control and Prevention's** mission is to collaborate to create the expertise, information, and tools needed to protect their health—through health promotion, prevention of disease, injury, and disability, and preparedness for new health threats. ACP supports **\$7.8 billion** overall for this mission. The College also supports **\$50 million for the CDC's Injury and Prevention Control** to fund research on prevention of firearms-related injuries and deaths and support 10 to 20 multi-year studies and help rebuild lost research capacity in this area.

Lastly, the College strongly supports **\$41.6 billion for NIH** in FY2020 so the nation's medical research agency continues making important discoveries that treat and cure disease to improve health and save lives and that maintain the United States' standing as the world leader in medical and biomedical research.

The College greatly appreciates the support of the Subcommittee on these issues and looks forward to working with Congress on the FY2020 appropriations process.