



July 11, 2016

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education  
and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education  
and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

AcademyHealth—the professional society representing health services researchers and health policy practitioners nationwide—is pleased to see that the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriates funding for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) in its fiscal year 2017 spending bill. We appreciate that you view AHRQ as a critical component of the nation's health research enterprise, whose work ensures health care is safe, efficient, and affordable.

Unfortunately, the bill's 16 percent cut to AHRQ's discretionary budget would significantly undermine that role. If enacted, the bill would bring the agency's budget to levels not seen since 2001 (in nominal dollars). This cut would follow upon the 8 percent cut AHRQ sustained in fiscal year 2016 that resulted in the termination of long-standing programs—including the HIV Research Network and the National Quality Measures Clearinghouse, among others—as well as cutbacks in the production of the congressionally mandated National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Reports that serve as the gold standard in monitoring and improving patient outcomes.

The \$54 million cut to AHRQ's discretionary budget proposed in the Labor-HHS bill would be compounded by the bill's \$150 million rescission of funding for the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Trust Fund, which under the Affordable Care Act, transfers approximately \$90 million to AHRQ each year. We are also troubled by the bill's other provisions that would undermine health services research, including significant cuts to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) and a prohibition on funding for any patient-centered outcomes research with appropriated dollars across the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Taken together, these proposals would be a significant blow to federally funded health services research and our ability to fund research that delivers information on how different interventions work for different patients in different settings. They will make it harder for health care delivery organizations, policymakers, and the people they serve to make informed choices about how to get the best, safest care while addressing costs and protecting patient safety.

It is for these reasons that AcademyHealth is extremely disappointed with the proposed funding level for AHRQ, and strongly opposed to the cuts at CMMI, the claw back of the PCOR Trust Fund, and the prohibition on discretionary funding for PCOR more generally. While we recognize that Congress is under extreme pressure to fund competing priorities whilst doing its best to keep the federal budget in check—reducing our ability to make health care safer, less complex, and less costly is simply the wrong decision.



As you work with your colleagues to enact final appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2017, we hope you will consider ways to preserve funding for health services research. We thank you for your consideration of our request and look forward to helping you protecting the agency's unique role in improving health and health care. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at [lisa.simpson@academyhealth.org](mailto:lisa.simpson@academyhealth.org) or 202.292.6700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Simpson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Simpson" clearly distinguishable.

Lisa Simpson M.B., B.Ch., M.P.H., F.A.A.P.  
President and Chief Executive Officer