

Testimony of Research!America to the Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Concerning Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations for NIH, CDC, and AHRQ

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On behalf of Research!America and our alliance, which advocates for science, discovery, and innovation to achieve better health for all, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies on Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) appropriations. We are grateful that for FY20, the base budgets of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) were increased and the Subcommittee additionally provided dedicated funding for critical research programs. We again ask that you provide increased funding for NIH (least \$44.7 billion), CDC (\$8.3 billion), and AHRQ (\$471 million) in FY21.

The National Institutes of Health

Each year, more than 125,000 Americans lose their lives by age 45 to physical and mental illness. Because personal loss is a tragedy, not a statistic, it is impossible to fully capture the devastating impact of so many lives cut short. However, it is possible to deploy science to successfully fight back. The research that NIH funds delivers health, social, and economic benefits that endure and multiply as time goes on. With the current level of investment, NIH is only able to fund 20% of the meritorious grant proposals it receives. The steadfast commitment of federal policymakers from both sides of the aisle to rebuild the NIH budget over the past decade has helped restore our nation's place at the cutting edge of medical progress. It is essential that we keep up that mantle and gain the upper hand over diseases that rob us of time, independence, and loved ones.

The NIH is the world's leading funder of basic biomedical research, and Americans recognize the value this research delivers. According to a national survey Research!America commissioned in January 2020, 88% of Americans believe it is important for Congress and the President to assign a high priority to faster medical progress. As it stands, our nation spends about 5 cents of each health dollar on research to prevent, cure and treat disease. Some 61% of Americans say that this level of investment is not enough. Americans want medical progress, and they want the U.S. to do more to drive it.

More than 80 percent of NIH funding is awarded through almost 50,000 competitive grants to more than 300,000 researchers at over 2,500 universities, medical schools, and other research institutions in every state. Research supported by NIH is typically at the early, non-commercial stages of the research pipeline; NIH funding works in tandem with critical private sector investment and development while delivering significant economic benefits. Basic research funded by the NIH fuels the entry of new drugs into the market, providing an estimated return on public investment of \$1.43 for every dollar invested. The Human Genome Project has produced \$1 trillion of economic growth—a 178-fold return on investment. The NIH also plays an integral

role in educating and training America's future scientists and medical innovators by sponsoring fellowships and training grants.

NIH advances the interests of America and Americans in other crucial ways. For example, NIH is funding a new genome center for the All of Us Research Program, which will enable researchers to better understand the value, including the strengths and limitations, of long-read sequencing as it relates to exploring more elusive parts of the genome. The Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative, of which NIH is a part, is aimed at revolutionizing our understanding of the human brain. The Initiative is working to accelerate the development and application of innovative technologies, through which researchers will be able to draw a new picture of the brain that, for the first time, shows how individual cells and complex neural circuits interact in both time and space.

We believe it is in the strategic interests of the U.S. to increase funding for NIH to at least \$44.7 billion in FY21, an increase of \$3 billion over FY20 enacted. Research!America believes this funding increase is warranted by the ever-growing magnitude of our health challenges, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the tangible and intangible costs of inaction, and the undeniable return on medical progress.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

We urge you to fund the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at a level of \$8.3 billion in FY21, a 4.8% increase. As demonstrated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, public health threats do not respect international borders, and in our increasingly globalized world, we are more vulnerable than ever to emerging, deadly infectious diseases.

CDC's work is also crucial to combating the opioid epidemic, which is claiming approximately 130 American lives each day, and to tackling antimicrobial resistance. Our public health surveillance infrastructure is vital to a secure and prosperous future for our nation as are our roads and highways – we cannot afford to ignore it.

CDC is tasked with protecting and advancing the nation's health, and over the past 70 years it has worked diligently to thwart deadly outbreaks, costly pandemics, and debilitating disease. Moreover, CDC plays a key role in research that leads to life-saving vaccines, bolsters our nation's defense against and response to bioterrorism, and improves health tracking and data analytics. CDC's work has benefited Americans in myriad ways, including investigating an outbreak of acute lung injury from use of e-cigarette or vaping products, supporting our national surveillance infrastructure to detect and prevent antimicrobial resistant infections, providing accurate and accessible health information, and preventing millions of hospitalizations.

Ebola, Zika, influenza, the opioid epidemic, measles outbreaks, and, most recently, the ongoing, novel COVID-19 outbreak have shown just how critical CDC is to the health of our nation and have also revealed the enormity of the challenge the agency faces as it works to safeguard American lives. To protect us, CDC scientists must be on the ground fighting public health threats wherever and whenever they occur. But there is a growing gap between the funding provided to CDC and the demands and challenges placed before the agency. We request that

CDC receive at least \$8.3 billion in FY21, \$380 million over FY20 enacted, to carry out its crucially important responsibilities.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

AHRQ is the lead federal agency that is tasked with making sure our nation is not just making medical progress but that this progress translates into more effective, efficient, and affordable health care for Americans across the country. The health services research that AHRQ conducts and supports has reduced medical errors, ensured that providers in rural areas have the same access to cutting-edge medicine as those in urban areas, identified ways to squeeze out costly duplication and waste from the health care system, and benefited patients and taxpayers in numerous other ways. AHRQ has historically been grossly underfunded relative to the need and potential for cost- and life-saving improvements in American health care delivery. We urge you to fund AHRQ at a level of \$471 million, a 39% increase over FY20 enacted, in FY21.

AHRQ is one of the federal agencies responsible for ensuring medical progress translates into better patient care. The value of medical discovery and development hinge on smart health care delivery. Out of the \$3.82 trillion in annual spending on health care, an estimated 25% could be prevented by addressing errors and inefficiency.

AHRQ-funded research identifies and addresses this waste of limited health care dollars, empowering patients to receive the right care at the right time in the right settings. For example, AHRQ-funded research has helped identify methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), which causes 80,000 invasive infections each year in the U.S., in long-term care facilities to address the increase of hospital patients affected by health care-associated infections. This research showed that MRSA infections and hospitalizations were reduced by 30% in patients using a treatment that cleansed the bacteria from their skin or noses. AHRQ-funded research has played a pivotal role in reducing hospital-acquired conditions by nearly 1 million from 2014-2017, saving lives and \$7.7 billion in health care costs.

AHRQ is a nimble and critical health care investment. If we underinvest in AHRQ, we are inviting unnecessary health care spending and wasting the opportunity to ensure patients receive the quality care they need.

We appreciate your consideration of our funding requests and thank you for your stewardship over these critically important federal spending priorities.

Sincerely,

Mary Woolley
President and CEO
Research!America