

Support the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

From: The Honorable Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Sent By: kate.schisler@mail.house.gov
Date: 3/17/2017

Dear Colleague:

Please join me in supporting funding for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) in the Fiscal Year 2018 House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee.

The United States spends more than \$3 trillion annually on health care. With the federal government the largest purchaser of this care, spending more than \$1 trillion per year and rising, it has a responsibility to fund research that determines how to make care as effective, efficient, affordable, equitable, and safe as possible. AHRQ is the only federal agency with the sole purpose of generating and disseminating evidence to better understand how to eliminate the roughly 30 percent of health care spending that is identified as inappropriate, ineffective, or harmful.

Research to discover cures is critical. But it is equally important to fund research on how to optimally deliver new cures—and those we already have—to the right patients at the right time in the right setting. The health services research, quality improvement protocols, datasets, and tools supported by AHRQ are used in hospitals, medical centers, primary care practices, and public health departments in communities across the nation to improve the quality, access, and value of health care delivery for patients.

The full text of the letter is below. If you have any questions or would like to add your name to the letter, please have your staff contact Kate Schisler at kate.schisler@mail.house.gov or 5-4376.

Sincerely,

Don Beyer

Member of Congress

March XX, 2017

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

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

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you and your colleagues begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you fund the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) at the FY 2015 level of \$364 million. AHRQ is an essential element of the nation's healthcare ecosystem, charged with improving the quality and delivery of healthcare; we ask that this committee fully support AHRQ in its mission as it makes its appropriations decisions.

AHRQ sits at the critical intersection where patient need meets healthcare delivery. It is the only federal agency whose sole focus is to generate reliable research on how to deliver the highest quality care, at the greatest value, with the best outcomes. AHRQ-funded research allows us to understand where waste, inefficiencies, and gaps exist within the healthcare continuum, and allows patients, payers, providers, and others to harness American innovation and make the healthcare system safer, more efficient, and more effective. We have seen an explosion of promising innovations in the healthcare field but, without AHRQ-funded research and data to ensure that those innovations are delivered to patients in need as optimally as possible, we are falling short of our promises to the American people.

AHRQ works in close contact with both the public and private sectors to develop public-private partnerships which ensure that local, as well as national, healthcare needs are being met. AHRQ works across the spectrum of healthcare, assessing the impact of mental health programs on youth recidivism, improving nursing training, ensuring that medicine becomes ever more patient-centered, developing 21st Century health IT infrastructure, and beyond.

Thanks in part to AHRQ, the rate of hospital-acquired conditions has dropped by 21 percent, saving Americans nearly \$28 billion. The AHRQ-funded Comparative Health System Performance Initiative will identify the best practices from high performing health systems and translate those lessons to better patient-centered outcomes in other health systems. AHRQ is also on the front lines of the battle against the opioid epidemic, providing doctors in rural communities the support they need to develop effective medication assisted therapy protocols that could save thousands of lives.

The research and programs that AHRQ funds help healthcare providers understand how they can provide better care to patients, help patients understand how they can take charge of their own health, and help payers understand where their dollars are going and how they are being used. The modest investment that this committee makes in AHRQ reaps millions of dollars in savings each year, keeps Americans healthier, and helps to ensure that our healthcare system is innovative and responsive to patients' needs.

Nearly two thirds of federal spending is traced back to healthcare and healthcare delivery. In the austere budget environment we are currently facing, every dollar that we invest in researching

healthcare and streamlining its delivery is a sound investment in our fiscal future. AHRQ's research will help close our fiscal gap by helping us to eliminate the 30 percent of healthcare spending identified as inappropriate, ineffective, or harmful. Just as we fund national war colleges to ensure that our military is the most effective fighting force in the world, funding AHRQ ensures that our healthcare system becomes the most efficient one in the world. We urge you to make AHRQ, and its critical research, a priority in FY 2018.

Sincerely,