

Testimony of Research!America to the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Concerning Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations for NIH, CDC, and AHRQ
Submitted for the Record, March 2, 2017

Contact: Sara Chang, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Research!America,
schang@researchamerica.org

On behalf of Research!America, the nation's largest not-for-profit education and advocacy alliance working to accelerate medical progress and strengthen our nation's public health system, thank you for this opportunity to share our views on Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) appropriations under the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. We request an increase of \$2 billion for the National Institutes of Health, \$7.8 billion for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and \$364 million for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) drives the discovery of new treatments and cures

NIH is the world's leading funder of basic biomedical research, and Americans recognize the value this research delivers. Since 1992, Research!America has commissioned national and state-level surveys to gauge public sentiment on issues related to health research and innovation. One of the most consistent findings over time has been Americans' support for basic research. In a recent survey, 64 percent of respondents agreed that "even if it brings no immediate benefits, basic scientific research that advances the frontiers of knowledge is necessary and should be supported by the federal government."

More than 80 percent of NIH funding is awarded through almost 50,000 competitive grants to 300,000 researchers at more than 2,500 universities, medical schools, and other research institutions in every state and around the world. Research supported by NIH is typically at the early, non-commercial stages of the research pipeline; therefore, NIH funding complements critical private sector investment and development. The NIH also plays an essential role in educating and training America's future scientists and medical innovators. In 2016, NIH sponsored over 5,000 training grants and fellowships for biomedical- and health-focused graduate and medical students, postdoctoral researchers and young investigators-- a pivotal investment in America's future research workforce.

NIH advances the interests of America and Americans in other crucial ways. For example, the Undiagnosed Diseases Program at the National Human Genome Research Institute provides hope for patients who seek answers for deadly and debilitating conditions that have evaded diagnosis. The National Institute of Nursing Research taps into the unique insights of the nursing community to confront critical challenges in health and health care, and the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health supports research to advance promising areas of medicine and healthcare outside the traditional biomedical arena. Because much of these non-traditional approaches lack intellectual property protection, potentially beneficial solutions are too often not explored. NIH helps address this gap in the research and development pipeline.

NIH also plays a pivotal role in the public-private research and development of countermeasures when epidemics and other global public health threats emerge.

We believe it is in the strategic interests of the United States to increase annual discretionary funding for NIH by \$2 billion in FY18, and to supplement that increase by releasing the FY18 funding targeted for specific national research initiatives under the 21st Century Cures Innovation Fund. Research!America believes this powerful infusion of funds is merited by the magnitude of our health challenges, the tangible and intangible costs of inaction, and the extraordinary return on medical progress.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) safeguards the nation's health

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 defenses against bioterrorism and improves health tracking and data analytics. CDC's work has benefited America and Americans in myriad ways, including dramatically reducing the incidence of child lead poisoning, reducing deaths from motor vehicle accidents, containing dangerous pandemic and epidemics, achieving a significant expansion of newborn hearing tests and other screening measures and preventing millions of hospitalizations.

Ebola, Zika, Dengue fever and other emerging health threats have shown just how critical CDC is to our nation, and have also revealed the enormity of the challenge the agency faces as it works to safeguard American lives. To protect our nation, CDC scientists must be on-the-ground fighting public health challenges wherever and whenever they occur. But there is an imbalance between the funding provided to CDC and its increasingly growing mission demands. We request that CDC receive at least \$7.8 billion in FY18 to carry out its crucially important responsibilities.

AHRQ provides best practices to keep health care costs under control

AHRQ is the lead federal agency responsible for ensuring that medical progress translates into better patient care. The value of medical discovery and development hinge on smart health care delivery. Out of the \$3 trillion annual spending on healthcare, 30 percent is wasted on medical errors, unnecessary services, excessive administrative costs and inefficient delivery. AHRQ-funded research identifies and addresses this diversion of limited health care dollars, empowering patients to receive the right care at the right time in the right settings. Nearly 20 percent of Medicare patients face readmission within 30 days of discharge. AHRQ-funded research identified treatment gaps and helped discharged patients receive proper outpatient treatment and follow up appointments, decreasing readmission rates by up to 50 percent.

From ensuring new medical discoveries reach doctors and patients as quickly as possible in rural as well as urban areas to deploying telemedicine and other health IT to address challenges in health care access and delivery, to cutting the number of deadly and preventable medical errors, AHRQ serves many critical purposes. If we underinvest in AHRQ, we are inviting unnecessary health care spending and squandering the opportunity to ensure patients receive the quality care

they need. We ask that you commit to investing in life- and cost-saving health services research by funding AHRQ at \$364 million in FY18.

Conclusion

There are few federal investments that convey benefits as important and far-reaching as funding for NIH, CDC and AHRQ: new cures, new businesses, new jobs; innovative solutions that improve health care delivery and optimize the use of limited health dollars; and a public health system nimble and sophisticated enough to meet daunting challenges to the health and safety of the American people. We appreciate your consideration of our funding requests and thank you for your stewardship over such critically important federal spending priorities.