

Friends of AHRQ FY26 Appropriations letter

Dear Chair Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

To meet the needs of America's patients, researchers, providers, and health systems, XX organizations call for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to be fully funded at \$500 million in FY26.

As our nation's goal of having a system that ensures access to high quality and effective healthcare for all is falling far short of its potential, gaining a better understanding of how our healthcare system works and does not work continues to be bipartisan priority. Federally funded health service research grants are how we identify what is not working and create the evidence-based solutions policymakers need to improve health outcomes for everyone. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is the leading federal agency for funding health services research (HSR) and primary care research (PCR). AHRQ is the bridge between cures and care and ensures that Americans get the best health care at the best value.

As our nation faces multiple health crises, it is more critical than ever to improve our health systems. For example, rural communities are facing complex health challenges with the ongoing closures of rural hospitals and clinics leading to worsening health outcomes for residents. In parallel, the opioid crisis, which has disproportionately impacted rural America, has ravaged American life as overdose deaths are the leading cause of injury-related death in the U.S. In response to these challenges, AHRQ has long identified rural populations as a priority population to support and continues to fund research to improve rural health systems. While policymakers and health systems take dramatic action to respond to existing healthcare challenges, they are doing so without sufficient evidence on its impact on health outcomes, the value of care, and healthcare access. AHRQ-funded projects fill these knowledge gaps.



AHRQ supports research to broaden access to essential services, improve health care quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety,

and decrease medical errors. The RAND Corporation released a [report](#) in 2020, as called for by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, which identified AHRQ as “the only agency that has statutory authorizations to generate HSR and be the home for federal primary care research, and the unique focus of its research portfolio on systems-based outcomes (e.g., making health care safer, higher quality, more accessible, equitable, and affordable) and approaches to implementing improvement across health care settings and populations in the United States.” AHRQ offers valuable insights on every facet of the health care system. For example, the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine 2021 [report](#) on *Implementing High Quality Primary Care* highlighted the value of and need for federal investments in AHRQ through the National Center for Excellence in Primary Care Research.

To deliver better outcomes, we need to be able to differentiate which healthcare interventions work, for whom they work, and how to implement them. For example, the effectiveness of telehealth is diminished if we do not have an evidence-based approach to provide consistent access regardless of who the patient is, and addressing questions like this is where AHRQ has a proven track record. As the lead agency for health services research and primary care research, AHRQ provides the resources that policymakers, health system leaders, medical providers, and patients need to determine the effectiveness of health systems delivery.

While the vast majority of federally funded research focuses on one specific disease or organ system, AHRQ is the only federal agency that funds research on health systems across the nation. The benefits of investing in health services research through AHRQ can be measured in saved lives, better value care, and improved patient outcomes to ultimately make America healthier. For example, implementing of just one AHRQ-funded [study](#) on reducing hospital acquired conditions prevented an estimated 20,500 hospital deaths and saved \$7.7 billion in health care costs from 2014 to 2017. Additional investments in AHRQ are needed to maximize the implementation of research findings across the public health and health care continuum to improve patient care and keep pace with the rapidly evolving and changing health care landscape.

For these reasons, as you draft the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2026, the XXX undersigned members of the Friends of AHRQ respectfully **request no less than \$500 million in funding for the Agency for Healthcare and Research and Quality (AHRQ)**. This request reflects an inflation adjustment from FY10



and the demonstrated need to expand and accelerate HSR investments to inform decision-making on the health care system.

AHRQ is the federal vehicle for studying and improving the United States healthcare system, and it needs the resources to meet its mission and this moment. Through this appropriation level, AHRQ will be better able to fund the “last mile” of research from cure to care.

Thank you for your support of AHRQ and health services research. For more information, please contact Josh Caplan at Josh.Caplan@AcademyHealth.org.

Sincerely,

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