



July 1, 2004

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman Regula:

As President of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), I urge you to provide the highest possible funding levels for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the Title VII and VIII health professions education programs when the Subcommittee considers the FY 2005 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. The AAMC represents the nation's 125 accredited medical schools, some 400 major teaching hospitals; more than 105,000 faculty in 96 academic and scientific societies; and the nation's 66,000 medical students and 97,000 residents.

As a result of the long-standing bipartisan commitment of your subcommittee and the Congress to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), we have entered an exciting new era in medicine. NIH-supported research continues to improve the health and quality of life for all Americans in dramatic ways. If we are to sustain this momentum and continue this transformation of health, this nation must maintain its commitment to medical research. The AAMC urges the subcommittee to increase funding for NIH beyond the Administration's proposal of \$28.6 billion. We also urge you to maintain the cap on extramural salaries at Level I of the Executive pay scale, which would allow medical schools and teaching hospitals to continue to attract and retain the highest quality investigators.

As a member of the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition, the AAMC urges you to restore funding for the Title VII health professions programs to at least the FY 2003 level of \$308 million and provide an increase for the Title VIII nursing programs in FY 2005. The Administration's FY 2005 budget eliminates virtually all of the funding for the Title VII health professions programs, which are the only federal programs designed to train providers in interdisciplinary settings to meet the needs of special and underserved populations, as well as increase minority representation in the health care workforce. Failure to restore these cuts will eliminate any federal efforts to increase the supply and diversity of the health care workforce and provide access to quality health care for all segments of the population.

The AAMC thanks the Administration for providing a significant increase for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) in its FY 2005 budget proposal. The NHSC is the most effective mechanism through which the federal government can intervene to redress the present and future inadequacies of health services delivery and inequities in health status and disease burden. The AAMC encourages the Subcommittee to meet the Administration's FY 2005 recommendation of \$205 million.

The AAMC joins the Friends of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) in recommending an FY 2005 budget of \$443 million for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), a \$139 million increase over FY2004.

AHRQ is the lead Public Health Service agency focused on health care quality.

Congress and the Administration have recently asked AHRQ to undertake new and important responsibilities. The Medicare Modernization Act includes a \$53 million authorization for the agency to conduct comparative efficacy studies of health services and to convene the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. In addition, the Administration has directed AHRQ to strengthen its current investments in patient safety and health information technology. However, the Administration's FY 2005 budget freezes AHRQ spending at FY 2004 levels. The Friends of AHRQ recommendation includes the \$53 million authorized in the Medicare Modernization Act and \$86 million to ensure adequate funding for high priority needs.

We realize the Subcommittee faces enormous challenges in reconciling the multitude of priorities within your bill. However, we believe these funds are critical if we are to continue the fight to provide healthier, more productive lives for all Americans. We look forward to continuing to work with you to sustain these programs that are vital to the nation's health.

Sincerely,

Jordan J. Cohen, M.D.