

**Statement by the Association of American Medical Colleges on
FY 2018 Appropriations for the Department of Health and Human Services
Submitted for the Record to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies – March 8, 2017**

The Association of American Medical Colleges is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through innovative medical education, cutting-edge patient care, and groundbreaking medical research. Its members comprise all 147 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 80 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC serves the leaders of America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their 160,000 faculty members, 83,000 medical students, 115,000 resident physicians, and thousands of graduate students and postdoctoral trainees in the biomedical sciences. In FY 2018, the AAMC requests the following for federal priorities essential in assisting medical schools and teaching hospitals to fulfill their missions of education, research, and patient care: an increase of at least \$2 billion over FY 2017 for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in addition to funds included in the 21st Century Cures Act for targeted initiatives; \$364 million in budget authority for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); \$580 million for the Title VII health professions and Title VIII nursing workforce development programs, and \$300 million for the Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education (CHGME) program, at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)'s Bureau of Health Workforce; and continued support for student aid through the Department of Education and HRSA's National Health Service Corps. The AAMC appreciates the Subcommittee's longstanding, bipartisan efforts to strengthen these programs.

National Institutes of Health. Congress's long-standing bipartisan support for medical research through the NIH has contributed greatly to improving the health and well-being of all Americans. The foundation of scientific knowledge built through NIH-funded research drives medical innovation that

improves health through new and better diagnostics, improved prevention strategies, and more effective treatments. More than 80 percent of the NIH's budget is competitively awarded through more than 57,000 research and training grants to more than 300,000 researchers at over 2,500 universities and research institutions located in every state and D.C. At least half of this funding supports life-saving research at America's medical schools and teaching hospitals, where scientists, clinicians, fellows, residents, medical students, and trainees work side-by-side to improve the lives of Americans through research. This partnership is a unique and highly-productive relationship, one that lays the foundation for improved health and quality of life and strengthens the nation's long-term economy.

The AAMC thanks Congress for the bipartisan support that resulted in the inclusion of \$32.1 billion in the FY 2016 omnibus spending bill for medical research conducted and supported by the NIH. Likewise, the AAMC is deeply grateful to the Subcommittee for its tireless efforts to continue this budget trajectory with a substantial increase for NIH in FY 2017. The AAMC strongly supports enactment of a final FY 2017 spending bill with \$34.1 billion for NIH without further delay.

In FY 2018, the AAMC supports the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research recommendation that Congress appropriate an increase of at least \$2 billion above FY 2017 for NIH, in addition to funds included in the 21st Century Cures Act for targeted initiatives. This funding level would enable real growth over biomedical inflation as an important step to ensuring stability in the nation's research capacity over the long term. Moreover, our recommendation would help advance the scientific momentum envisioned by the 21st Century Cures Act – enacted with broad bipartisan support – in which the Innovation Account supplements the agency's base budget. Securing a reliable, robust budget trajectory for NIH will be key in positioning the agency – and the patients who rely on it – to capitalize on the full range of research in the biomedical, behavioral, social, and population-based sciences.

The AAMC continues to be concerned about the long-lasting impact of a stagnant or reduced NIH budget on the next generation of scientists, who see training funds threatened and the possibility of sustaining a career in research diminished. Of particular concern is the challenge of maintaining a cadre of clinician-scientists to facilitate translation of basic research to human medicine. NIH supports many innovative training programs and funding mechanisms that foster scientific creativity and exploration.

Scientific discoveries rely on support from Congress. Additional funding is needed if we are to strengthen our nation's research capacity, ensure a biomedical research workforce that reflects the racial and gender diversity of our citizenry, and inspire a passion for science in current and future generations of researchers.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Complementing the medical research supported by NIH, AHRQ sponsors health services research designed to improve the quality of health care, decrease health care costs, and provide access to essential health care services by translating research into measurable improvements in the health care system. The AAMC joins the Friends of AHRQ in recommending \$364 million in budget authority for the agency in FY 2018.

As the only federal agency with the sole purpose of generating evidence to make health care safer; higher quality; and more accessible, equitable, and affordable, AHRQ also works to ensure such evidence is available across the continuum of health care stakeholders, from patients to payers to providers. These research findings will better guide and enhance consumer and clinical decision-making, provide improved health care services, and promote efficiency in the organization of public and private systems of health care delivery.

Health Professions Funding. HRSA's Title VII health professions and Title VIII nursing workforce development programs are the only federal programs designed to improve the supply, distribution, and diversity of the nation's primary care workforce. Through loans, loan guarantees, and

scholarships to students, and grants and contracts to academic institutions and non-profit organizations, the Title VII and Title VIII programs fill the gaps in the supply of health professionals not met by traditional market forces.

Titles VII and VIII are structured to allow grantees to test educational innovations, respond to changing delivery systems and models of care, and address timely topics in their communities. By assessing the needs of the communities they serve and emphasizing interprofessional education and training, Title VII and VIII programs bring together knowledge and skills across disciplines to provide effective, efficient and coordinated care. Further, studies demonstrate that the programs graduate more minority and disadvantaged students and prepare providers that are more likely to serve in Community Health Centers (CHC) and the NHSC.

In addition to promoting educational innovations and preparing the workforce for changing delivery systems, the programs also support faculty development, curriculum development, and continuing education opportunities. These are all important components to ensure faculty and providers are equipped to meet the nation's changing needs and train the next generation of health professionals.

The AAMC joins the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) in recommending \$580 million for these important workforce programs in FY 2018. This funding level is necessary to ensure continuation of all existing Title VII and Title VIII programs while also supporting promising new initiatives.

The full spectrum of Title VII programs, including the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program and the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP), is essential to prepare our next generation of medical professionals to adapt to the changing health care needs of the nation's aging and increasingly diverse population. As an example of their impact, in academic year 2013-2014, AHECs trained more than 24,000 health professions students in over 10,000 sites across the country, including community-

based and ambulatory care settings and CHCs. Further, research shows that HCOP has helped students from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds throughout the educational pipeline achieve higher grade point averages and matriculate into health professions programs – critical to improving the cultural competency of our health workforce and promoting health equity nationwide.

In addition to funding for Title VII and Title VIII, HRSA's Bureau of Health Workforce also supports the Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education (CHGME) program. This program provides critical federal graduate medical education support for children's hospitals to prepare the future primary care and specialty care workforce for our nation's children. We strongly support full funding for the Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education program at \$300 million in FY 2018.

Student Aid and the National Health Service Corps (NHSC). The AAMC urges the Subcommittee to sustain student loan and forgiveness programs for graduate and professional students at the Department of Education. The average graduating debt of medical students is currently \$190,000, and total repayment can range from \$340,000 to \$406,000.

Along with other NHSC stakeholder organizations, the AAMC urges Congress to provide \$380 million for the NHSC in FY 2018. As the nation faces multiple health professional shortages, sustained investments in workforce programs are necessary to help care for our nation's most vulnerable populations. Recognizing that mandatory funding may be provided through other mechanisms, the appropriations committees retain primary responsibility for funding the administrative functions of the NHSC and for avoiding budgetary lapses in future years. We look forward to working with Congress to help ensure a long-term investment in the NHSC without sacrificing other federal health professions training support.

Once again, the AAMC appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record and looks forward to working with the Subcommittee as it prepares its FY 2018 spending bill.