



Association of

American Medical Colleges

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Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.

President and Chief Executive Officer

December 19, 2017

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management & Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable Eric Hargan
Acting Secretary and Deputy Secretary
Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Director Mulvaney and Acting Secretary Hargan:

As the Administration prepares its fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget request for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), I write on behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to urge a strong commitment to the full scope of science, health care, social services, diversity, and public health programs at HHS, which serves to improve the health and well-being of all Americans.

The AAMC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through innovative medical education, cutting-edge patient care, and groundbreaking medical research. Our members comprise all 149 accredited U.S. 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 nearly 160,000 faculty members, 83,000 medical students, 115,000 resident physicians, and thousands of graduate students and postdoctoral trainees in the biomedical sciences.

We appreciate the clarification issued by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D., and HHS that "there are no banned words at CDC" and "[w]e will continue to talk about all our important public health programs" as the agency prepares its FY 2019 budget request. As a community driven by a dual commitment to science and ethics, we have been deeply concerned by the suggestion that the Administration's budget proposal would deliberately avoid terminology that underpins the work HHS conducts and supports.

In all fields, science is fundamental to progress and success, but in health care especially, patients expect their caregivers to be guided by the best possible evidence. It is essential for the federal government to embrace the value of reliably informed decision-making, and our country's longstanding global leadership in science and medicine is grounded in this approach. Likewise, patients benefit every day from the commitment to inclusivity at health care facilities across the country, and HHS plays an irreplaceable role in equipping health providers to deliver

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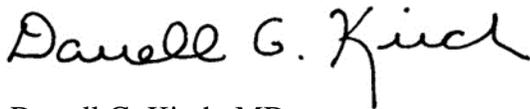
the best possible care to every patient, regardless of background, beliefs, race, sexual and gender identity, geography, or other factors.

While we appreciate the public assurance that HHS staff will not be prohibited from freely discussing these issues in the upcoming request or other venues, we also wish to emphasize the importance of supporting and advancing this vital work. Regrettably, the Administration's FY 2018 budget proposed devastating cuts – not only to CDC, but across HHS – that would have grossly weakened the nation's health security. Whether it is public health or health equity interventions carried out by CDC, the pursuit of tomorrow's cures supported by the National Institutes of Health, or pipeline programming to improve the nation's health workforce diversity through the Health Resources and Services Administration, we should be bolstering our investments across the Department, not undermining them.

In short, the words the Administration uses to characterize its FY 2019 budget request will be important, but so too will the policies underlying the proposal. We call on you to affirm your commitment to the nation's health in FY 2019 by promoting policy recommendations that enhance the well-being of all Americans, including the most vulnerable among us, and by proposing robust investments across the full range of HHS programming.

Our government has a responsibility to ensure that federal policies will be informed by the best available evidence and will strive to serve the entire citizenry. We urge you to ensure that the FY 2019 budget proposal and the Administration's policies moving forward clearly reflect and articulate this commitment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell G. Kirch". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Darrell G. Kirch, MD

President and Chief Executive Officer