

**Statement by the Association of American Medical Colleges on
FY 2019 Appropriations for the Department of Health and Human Services
Submitted for the Record to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education, and Related Agencies – June 1, 2018**

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) 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 151 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 173,000 faculty members, 89,000 medical students, 129,000 resident physicians, and more than 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral trainees in the biomedical sciences.

The AAMC is exceptionally grateful for the investment in key programs in the FY 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act. In FY 2019, 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: at least \$39.3 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), including funds provided through the 21st Century Cures Act for targeted initiatives; \$454 million in budget authority for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ); \$690 million for the Title VII health professions and Title VIII nursing workforce development programs; \$330 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. The AAMC appreciates the Subcommittee's longstanding, bipartisan efforts to strengthen these programs.

National Institutes of Health. Congress's longstanding 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. At least half of the life-saving research supported by the NIH takes place at America's medical schools and teaching hospitals nationwide, 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 \$37.1 billion in the FY 2018 omnibus spending bill for medical research conducted and supported by the NIH, which builds off substantial increases for NIH in FY 2016 and 2017. Additionally, the AAMC thanks the Subcommittee for recognizing the importance of continuing federal support for facilities and administrative expenses, and retaining the salary cap at Executive Level II of the federal pay scale.

In FY 2019, the AAMC supports the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research recommendation that Congress provide at least \$39.3 billion for NIH, including funds provided through the 21st Century Cures Act for targeted initiatives. This funding level would continue the momentum of recent years by

enabling meaningful base budget growth over biomedical inflation to help ensure stability in the nation's research capacity over the long term. Securing a reliable, robust budget trajectory for NIH is 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.

Scientific discoveries rely on support from Congress. We must continue the current trajectory 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 greatly appreciates the renewed investment in AHRQ in FY 2018 and joins the Friends of AHRQ in recommending \$454 million in budget authority for AHRQ in FY 2019.

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. Working with NIH, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), and other federal agencies, AHRQ's work 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 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 National Health Service Corps (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 is grateful for the enhanced investment in Title VII and Title VIII in FY 2018 and joins the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) in recommending \$690 million for

these important workforce programs in FY 2019. 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 2015-2016, AHECs trained more than 38,000 health professions students across the country, including in 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 Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) and Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education (CHGME) program. We appreciate the mandatory appropriations provided under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 for THCGME in FY 2018 and FY 2019 to support new and expanded primary medical residency programs in community-based ambulatory patient care settings. The CHGME 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 CHGME program at \$330 million in FY 2019.

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 \$192,000, and total repayment can range from \$348,000 to \$418,000.

The AAMC appreciates the funding provided under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 for NHSC, and supports full funding for the program in FY 2019. 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 2019 spending bill.