



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

June 23, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole,

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am **writing to urge you to provide robust funding for health and human services programs to support families and communities and support the continued inclusion of protections for institutional and individual health care providers' conscience rights, known as the Weldon Amendment.**

Catholic health care is the largest not-for-profit provider of health care services in the nation providing acute care, skilled nursing, long-term care services as well as other services including hospice, home health, assisted living and senior housing across our country. All 50 states and the District of Columbia are served by Catholic health care organizations. Last year Catholic hospitals provided care to 1 in 7 patients, employed 750,000 people had more than 5 million admissions, including one million Medicaid admissions.

Each day Catholic health care providers see the challenges facing families in need and we urge you to prioritize funding for the following programs in the FY2023 Labor, Health and Human Services Education and Related Agencies (L/HHS/E) appropriations bill:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Title VII health professions and Title VII nursing workforce development programs provide critical support for training and preparing individuals to gain the education and skills necessary to help meet the growing health workforce challenges facing our communities. Healthcare related workforce training programs provide a critical tool for strengthening and diversifying our nation's health care workforce and providing better health outcomes to patients. We therefore urge you to fully fund healthcare related workforce training programs so that more people have the skills and education needed to contribute to their communities.

Preventing Burnout in the Health Workforce Program provides grants to health care providers to address suicide, burnout, and mental and behavior health of health care workers. In addition, the program provides funding for HHS to study and develop strategies for addressing health provider burnout and encourages health care workers to seek assistance when needed. At a time when health care providers continue to face workforce shortages and workers addressing continued pandemic related demands, we urge you to fully fund the preventing burnout in the health workforce program at HRSA.

National Health Service Corps (NHSC): The NHSC awards scholarships to health profession students and assists graduates of health profession programs with loan repayment in return for an obligation to provide health care services in underserved rural and urban areas. In order to improve our national health work force and better serve underserved communities, we support the continued investment in the NHSC.

Health Equity Programs: We urge you to continue to fund the work of the Office of Minority Health within HHS, the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities and the CDC's Racial Ethnic Approach to Community Health program. Catholic health care providers see the racial and ethnic health disparities facing our communities across the nation. Through our commitment to [Confronting Racism by Achieving Health Equity](#) we urge to continue to invest in these programs to improve research, health outcomes and access to health care to end the racial and ethnic disparities in health care outcomes.

Rural Health Programs: Rural health programs, such as the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant Program, Rural Health Outreach and Network Development, State Offices of Rural Health, Rural Telehealth, Rural Policy Development, and others, are critical services for our nation's rural communities. We urge you to support funding for these programs to promote access to health care in rural areas.

Maternal and Child Health Block Grant (MCHBG), Healthy Start Program and Elimination of Maternal Health Disparities: The Title V MCHBG and Healthy Start Program provide critical support to women and their children who face barriers to treatment and care. The MCHBG is a critical source of flexible funding to allow local states and jurisdictions to meet the needs of mothers and their children. The grant program also allows local communities to support pregnant women and their children through use of hotline services and remote monitoring equipment. In addition, the Healthy Start Program provides support to high-risk pregnant women, infants, and families with high rates of infant mortality. Lastly, we know that the Committee is committed to eliminating maternal health disparities given the funding of important programs at the CDC, NIH, and other agencies. We support an increase in funding for the Title V MCHBG program, the Healthy Start Program and programs that address disparities in maternal health.

Social Determinants Accelerator Plans: The FY2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act provided funding to the CDC to create Social Determinants of Health Accelerator Plans to assist governments in developing strategies to address health and social needs of target populations. We urge you to increase funding for the SDOH Accelerator Plans program so that more states and local entities are able to expand existing SDOH programs and better evaluate and target SDOH efforts in their communities.

We urge you also to prioritize funding for funding for **firearm injury and mortality prevention research, health impacts of climate change, the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, the SAMSA mental health block grant program.** and the **tobacco and e-cigarettes** prevention.

Finally, the **Weldon Amendment** is a long-standing, historically bipartisan policy rider that protects hospitals and other institutional and individual health care providers that decline to provide, pay for, provide coverage of, or refer for abortions from discrimination. Catholic health care providers serve patients throughout the nation of all ages, race, and religious beliefs. This existing legal protection is essential for the continuation of both Catholic health care and our country's tradition of pluralism and commitment to freedom of religion and of conscience. We urge you to continue to include the Weldon Amendment in the FY 2023 Labor-H appropriations bill.

The Catholic health ministry remains committed to achieving greater access to health care services and strengthening our nation's health and social safety net to meet the continued needs of patients and communities. If you have any questions, please reach out to Lucas Swanepoel at L.Swanepoel@chausa.org.

Sincerely,



Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM
President and CEO