

March 5, 2019

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

The undersigned organizations write to request a strong topline appropriation for the CDC Division of Population Health **and an appropriation of \$16 million for the CDC Arthritis Program in the FY 2020 Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations bill**, a \$5 million increase over the prior fiscal year.

The CDC Arthritis Program is the only federal program dedicated solely to arthritis. One in 4 adults has doctor-diagnosed arthritis and an estimated 78 million Americans will have the disease by 2040. It has a profound physical, societal, and financial impact in every state and in every Congressional district. The demand and the need for the program is greater than ever.

We now know that the overall economic burden associated with arthritis is \$300 billion annually, thanks to the public health research undertaken at the CDC Arthritis Program over the last year. This stunning figure has more than doubled over the last decade. To put this into perspective, the annual economic cost of arthritis surpasses that of tobacco-related health effects, cancer, and diabetes.

The CDC Arthritis Program provides disease management resources to help people with arthritis better manage their symptoms and ultimately improve their health outcomes. As the country's leading cause of disability, arthritis limits the type or amount of work for 1 out of 3 working age adults (18–65 years) with the disease, or whether they can work at all. It also contributes to more than 750,000 hip and knee replacements every year, some of which could be avoided with proper disease management.

At the national level, the program funds organizations that have a broad impact across the country. For instance, the CDC Arthritis Program funds the only longitudinal study dedicated to arthritis, out of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The program also funds data collection that provides us with critical information about the disease, including prevalence, cost, co-morbidities, activity limitations, and uptake of physical activity and self-management programs. The program undertakes the lead work in detailing the prevalence of arthritis for *The Burden of Musculoskeletal Diseases in the United States: Prevalence, Societal and Economic Cost*, a critical publication for researchers and health policy analysts.

At the state level, the program helps states implement self-management education and physical activity interventions, which are crucial for overall disease management. At present, the CDC is only able to fund 13 states (AR, NC, KS, MA, OR, RI, MN, MO, NH, NY, UT, VA, and WA) despite the growing demand for these programs. There is a clear need for all 50 states and the District of Columbia to have arthritis programs.

With an increase of \$5 million in FY 2020, CDC's Arthritis Program would be able to:

- Fund research and data collection on prevalence, trends, and economic burden of disease
- Support up to six (6) new state programs for a total of 19 states
- Increase support of national dissemination of evidenced-based programs
- Create an Arthritis Management Network with up to four (4) projects

In closing, people can manage and reduce the symptoms of arthritis through self-management programs, physical activity, and weight loss. But effective interventions for arthritis are drastically underutilized, and the role of the CDC Arthritis Program is to provide leadership, technical expertise, and cutting-edge research to improve the health and well-being of people with arthritis.

Please give every consideration to a \$5 million increase in the Labor-HHS-Education allocation to the CDC Arthritis Program, bringing the total to \$16 million in FY 2020.

Sincerely,

American College of Rheumatology
Arthritis Foundation
Association of Women in Rheumatology
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Psoriasis Foundation
National Recreation and Park Association
Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation
Spondylitis Association of America
Rheumatology Nurses Society
United States Bone and Joint Initiative
YMCA of the USA