

April 2, 2013

The Honorable Jack Kingston
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS and Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
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Dear Chairmen Kingston and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the over 50 million Americans living with arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation urges you to continue support for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Arthritis Program. The Arthritis Program at the CDC currently receives \$13 million to support competitively bid grants to stakeholders and 12 state health departments' intervention based services to (1) increase awareness about appropriate arthritis self-management activities, (2) expand the reach of programs proven to improve the quality of life for people with arthritis, and (3) decrease the overall burden of arthritis including its associated disability and work and activity limitations.

Although we recognize that federal resources are limited, Congress must address the growing prevalence rates of arthritis. We know that by 2030, 25% of the adult population will have doctor-diagnosed arthritis. Additionally, less than 50% of working age adults with rheumatoid arthritis are still employed 10 years after disease onset. It is critical that Congress maintain support for the CDC Arthritis Program to address these serious health issues. Further cuts would severely hinder the community based interventions in place and would undermine the extensive arthritis public health infrastructure created at the CDC Arthritis Program.

Congress should resist the urge to consolidate chronic disease programs for perceived cost saving measures. Coordinated efforts to address multiple chronic conditions are welcome. However, consolidating programs may marginalize almost half the individuals who live with arthritis and no other chronic conditions. In previous years, Congress has considered several proposals in the President's budget to combine existing chronic disease programs; however, the chronic disease community, including the Arthritis Foundation, continues to express serious concerns about consolidating chronic disease programs at the CDC, such as the lack of resources for some of the disease specific programs.

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in the United States and has a tremendous economic impact on our Nation (more than \$128 billion, including over \$81 billion in direct costs for expenses such as physician visits and surgical interventions). As advocates for Americans living with arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation recommends that Congress:

- **Increase funding for the CDC Arthritis Program (\$15M FY2014)**

In order to improve the quality of life for individuals with arthritis, fund the Arthritis Program at \$15M (a \$2M increase) so that the Program can continue its work and fund an additional 2 states.

- **Oppose efforts to consolidate chronic disease programs at the CDC**

A consolidated chronic disease program would undermine effective work in disease-specific evidence based prevention programs for nearly half of the people with arthritis who do not have multiple chronic conditions.

The CDC Arthritis Program continues to serve the needs of those living with the pain and disability caused by arthritis. As Congress continues to set new priorities, we hope that you will continue support for this valued CDC program.

Sincerely,



John H. Klippel, MD
President and CEO