

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the more than 54 million Americans with doctor-diagnosed arthritis in the United States, the Arthritis Foundation writes to request \$50 million in funding for the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program (PSLRP, Section 775 of the Public Health Service Act) in the Senate Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

We were encouraged by the reauthorization of the PSLRP in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and urge you to build on this momentum in the FY 2021 appropriations process. Timely access to pediatric subspecialists is essential; once operational, the PSLRP would provide pediatric subspecialists \$35,000 in loan repayment each year for up to three years if he or she commits to practicing in an underserved area.

An estimated 300,000 children across the country live with arthritis and struggle to receive adequate care due to a severe shortage of pediatric rheumatologists. There are fewer than 450 board-certified and practicing pediatric rheumatologists; like other pediatric subspecialists, these providers are primarily located in and around large cities. Troublingly, seven states have no practicing pediatric rheumatologists (Oklahoma, New Hampshire, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, South Dakota, and Alaska) and five states have only one (West Virginia, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, and North Dakota). As a consequence, families face long wait times and must travel an average of 57 miles to be seen by a pediatric rheumatologist – more than double the average number of miles for other pediatric subspecialties.

Please give every consideration to appropriating \$50 million in FY 2021 to provide initial funding for the PSLRP. We look forward to working with you to improve care for children and all people with rheumatic diseases. If you have any questions please contact Vincent Pacileo at [vpacileo@arthritis.org](mailto:vpacileo@arthritis.org).

Sincerely,



Anna Hyde  
Vice President, Advocacy and Access  
Arthritis Foundation