

June 4, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to provide a strong allocation for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Arthritis Program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. During the ongoing public health emergency, the 54 million Americans with arthritis are firmly at higher risk from infection due to the novel coronavirus: comorbidities associated with the arthritis include heart disease (49 percent), diabetes (47 percent), and obesity (31 percent).

Our organizations have made it a priority to listen to the needs of the communities we represent during this unprecedented time. Additional resources for the Arthritis Program are sorely needed to ensure people with arthritis have access to evidence-based programs and that critical data collection and surveillance is supported and advanced. Robust funding in FY 2021 would be a first step toward achieving parity for arthritis relative to other chronic diseases within CDC. Under a full funding scenario of \$54 million in FY 2021, the program would be able to:

- Invest in improvements in data and surveillance, including support of academic prevention research centers focused on new arthritis interventions and assessing benefits to comorbid conditions.
- Provide funding to all states to fully operationalize a National Arthritis Program. Today, the CDC Arthritis Program funds only 13 state programs.
- Expand national partnerships critical to promoting awareness and providing access to arthritis self-management and physical activity programs that have a strong return on investment. The CDC estimates that physical activity programs can reduce annual health costs by about \$1,000 per person.

We believe it is time to address critical gaps in arthritis care and research and ensure the federal investment in arthritis matches the disease burden. Please give every consideration to appropriating \$54 million in FY 2021 to the CDC Arthritis Program. Please contact Vincent Pacileo, Director of Federal Affairs at the Arthritis Foundation, at [vpacileo@arthritis.org](mailto:vpacileo@arthritis.org) with questions or for more information.

Sincerely,

American College of Rheumatology  
Arthritis Foundation  
Association of Women in Rheumatology  
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations  
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors  
National Organization of Rheumatology Managers  
National Psoriasis Foundation

National Recreation and Park Association  
National Spine Health Foundation  
Rheumatology Nurses Society  
Sjögren's Foundation  
Spondylitis Association of America  
United States Bone and Joint Initiative  
YMCA of the USA