

August 8, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United State Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito
Chair
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee
United States Senate
170 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member,
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee
United States Senate
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chair Moore Capito, and Ranking Member Baldwin:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we thank you for preserving the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Chronic Disease and within that the Arthritis Program, funded at \$9 million in the FY26 Labor-HHS appropriations bill. Our groups have collectively researched, designed, disseminated, and referred patients to evidence-based self-management programs, which are proven to help people manage their arthritis and that serve as the foundation of the CDC Arthritis Program. In April we wrote to Senate leadership expressing deep concerns regarding the Reduction in Force (RIF) that effectively shuttered the Arthritis Program. As the Senate works with the House to advance a final bill, we hope to see the Arthritis Program fully preserved and funded at a minimum of its current funding level of \$11 million.

The program currently funds 12 states and a national alliance to help implement self-management education and physical activity interventions, which are crucial for overall disease management. Importantly, through its national partnerships it has helped refer people in all 50 states to evidence-based programs. It also funds data collection of critical information about the disease, including prevalence, cost of care, comorbidities, activity limitations, and uptake of physical activity and self-management programs. Further, the program leads the work in detailing the prevalence of arthritis for critical publications for researchers and health policy analysts. Thanks to those data we know that 1 in 4 adults has doctor-diagnosed arthritis; that an estimated 78 million Americans will live with the disease in the next two decades; and that the overall economic burden associated with arthritis is over \$300 billion annually.

In addition to funding these important state efforts, the program provides assistance to national organizations that are advancing one or more of the following outcomes:

- Improved arthritis management behaviors among people with arthritis;

- Improved social and physical environments for people with arthritis; and
- Increased number of health care providers who:
 - Screen arthritis patients for function, pain, and physical activity;
 - Counsel them on physical activity; and
 - Refer to proven interventions or physical activity opportunities.

Many of the undersigned organizations receive funding that furthers one of the above outcomes. These strategies include:

- Increasing access to, availability of, and sustainability of Arthritis-appropriate, Evidence-based Interventions (AAEBIs) nationwide,
- Promoting arthritis information for the public and AAEBI referrals through a national Arthritis Helpline,
- Building partnerships and coordinating national activities to address osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis, and
- Providing training and technical assistance to enhance the capacity of states to effectively address arthritis.

Again, we thank you for preserving these critical chronic disease functions within the CDC and look forward to working with you to advance these policies in the coming weeks and months. Please contact Anna Hyde at ahyde@arthritis.org if we can be of assistance or provide further information or resources.

Sincerely,

American College of Rheumatology
 Arthritis Foundation
 National Recreation and Park Association
 Cheryl Der Ananian, PhD, Chair, Osteoarthritis Action Alliance
 Sjögren's Foundation
 YMCA of the USA