

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 28, 2004

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
United States Senate
SH-711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3802

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
United States Senate
SH-731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1502

Dear Senators Specter and Harkin:

The recently-enacted Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 calls upon the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to conduct research on the outcomes, clinical effectiveness, and appropriateness of health care items and services, including prescription drugs. It also directs AHRQ to focus on the needs of the Medicare, Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) programs.

The new law authorizes \$50 million for the current fiscal year, and such sums for fiscal year 2005 and beyond. Subsequently, the budget resolution adopted by the Senate on March 12th included a Sense of the Senate Amendment supporting \$75 million in Fiscal Year 2005 for these activities. Due to this strong showing of Senate support and the importance of such research in improving quality and reducing costs, we urge you to provide new funding to AHRQ for FY 2005 so it may effectively carry out these important studies.

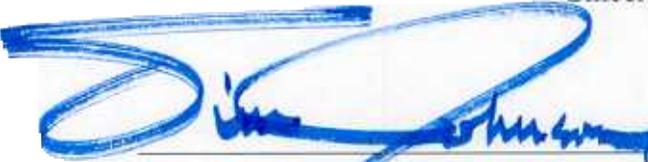
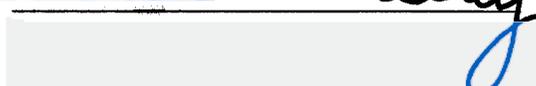
Consumers and other health care purchasers should have reliable information that compares different treatment options. The new law attempts to ensure that such information is quickly disseminated to patients, health care providers, health plans and other entities. With the cost of health care continuing to rise, obtaining the greatest health care value is essential. There are numerous clinical areas where the synthesis and evaluation of existing research as well as better, more definitive research, could improve the quality of care and help to reduce costs.

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There is strong bipartisan support for this type of research and we urge you to work through the appropriations process to provide support for these critical activities to the extent possible, as expressed in the Senate Budget Resolution. If this research fulfills its promise, the science base on which medical care is built will improve significantly and improvements in the quality of care and resource utilization are likely to follow quickly.

Please feel free to call on any one of us if we can be of assistance, or have a member of your staff contact Mara Baer of Senator Johnson's staff at 224-5842 or Dean Rosen of Senator Frist's staff at 224-3135. We look forward to working with you on this important goal as the year progresses.

Sincerely,

	
<u>Hillary Rodham Clinton</u>	<u>Chuck Grassley</u>
<u>Nent Lennard</u>	
<u>Max Baucus</u>	<u>Lamar Alexander</u>
	<u>Chris Hatch</u>