



**Human Factors
and Ergonomics
Society**

**Official Written Testimony in Support of
Fiscal Year 2021 Science and Research Funding at the
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and the
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health**

Submitted to the House Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

Addressing:
Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

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On behalf of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES), we are pleased to provide this written testimony to the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies for the official record. **HFES urges the Subcommittee to provide \$471 million for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and a minimum of \$354.8 million for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), including \$32 million for the Education and Research Centers (ERCs), in fiscal year (FY) 2021.**

AHRQ funds research to protect and promote patient safety and care, while identifying and evaluating efficiencies to save lives and reduce costs. HFES requests \$471 million, which is consistent with the FY 2010 level adjusted for inflation. This funding level will allow AHRQ to rebuild portfolios terminated after years of cuts. HFES also urges the Subcommittee to continue

to fund AHRQ as its own agency, rather than integrating it into the National Institutes of Health (NIH), as proposed in the President's FY 2021 budget request.

Additionally, HFES requests \$354.8 million for NIOSH, including \$32 million for the Education and Research Centers (ERCs). NIOSH supports education and research in occupational health through academic degree programs and research opportunities. With an aging occupational safety and health workforce, ERCs are essential for training the next generation of professionals. The Centers establish academic, labor, and industry research partnerships to achieve these goals. Currently, ERCs are responsible for supplying many of the country's OSH graduates who will go on to fill professional roles.

The FY 2021 President's budget request proposes reducing the NIOSH budget and eliminating many NIOSH programs, which would limit the ability of workers to avoid exposures that can result in injury or illnesses, push back improved working conditions, eliminate occupational safety and health educational services to U.S. businesses, and ultimately raise health care costs.

HFES and its members recognize and appreciate the challenging fiscal environment in which we as a nation currently find ourselves. However, we believe strongly that investment in scientific research serves as an important driver for innovation and the economy as well as for protecting and promoting the health, safety, and well-being of Americans. We thank the Subcommittee for its longtime recognition of the value of scientific and engineering research and its contribution to innovation and public health in the U.S.

The Value of Human Factors and Ergonomics Science

HFES is a multidisciplinary professional association with over 4,500 individual members worldwide, including psychologists and other scientists, engineers, and designers, all with a common interest in designing safe and effective systems and equipment that maximize and adapt to human capabilities.

For over 50 years, the U.S. federal government has funded scientists and engineers to explore and better understand the relationship between humans, technology, and the environment. Originally stemming from urgent needs to improve the performance of humans using complex systems such as aircraft during World War II, the field of human factors and ergonomics (HF/E) works to develop safe, effective, and practical human use of technology. HF/E does this by developing scientific approaches for understanding this complex interface, also known as “human-systems integration.” Today, HF/E is applied to fields as diverse as transportation, architecture, environmental design, consumer products, electronics and computers, energy systems, medical devices, manufacturing, office automation, organizational design and management, aging, farming, health, sports and recreation, oil field operations, mining, forensics, and education.

With increasing reliance by federal agencies and the private sector on technology-aided decision-making, HF/E is vital to effectively achieving our national objectives. While a large proportion of HF/E research exists at the intersection of science and practice—that is, HF/E is often viewed more at the “applied” end of the science continuum—the field also contributes to advancing “fundamental” scientific understanding of the interface between human decision-making, engineering, design, technology, and the world around us. The reach of HF/E is profound, touching nearly all aspects of human life from the health care sector, to the ways we travel, to the hand-held devices we use every day.

Conclusion

HFES urges the Subcommittee to provide \$471 million for AHRQ and \$354.8 million for NIOSH, including \$32 million for the Education and Research Centers (ERCs) in fiscal year (FY) 2021. These investments fund important research studies, enabling an evidence base, methodology, and measurements for improving healthcare, safety, and public health for Americans.

On behalf of the HFES, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions about HFES or HF/E research. HFES truly appreciates the Subcommittee's long history of support for scientific research and innovation.