



January 7, 2020

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy & Commerce
US House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy & Commerce
US House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Eshoo and Ranking Member Burgess,

On behalf of March of Dimes, the leading non-profit, non-partisan organization fighting for the health of all moms and babies, I write to express our strong support for *The Healthy Start Reauthorization Act of 2019* (HR 4801) and thank you for including the legislation in the January 8 hearing, “Legislation to Improve Americans’ Health Care Coverage and Outcomes.”

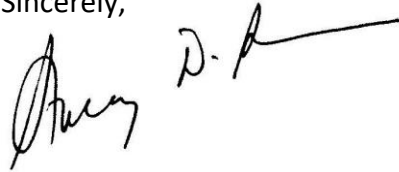
For 30 years, the Healthy Start Program has provided services to promote healthy pregnancies and strong infants in the nation’s most challenged communities. Due in part to the success of the program, the US infant mortality rate dropped to an all-time low in 2017.ⁱ The racial gap in infant mortality rates is narrowing, as well. Despite that progress, however, there is still much more to be done. Infant mortality is higher in the United States than in comparable countries, our rate of infant deaths has declined more slowly than in peer countries, and significant racial disparities in birth outcomes persist.ⁱⁱ Non-Hispanic black infants are more likely to be born preterm and more likely to die before their first birthday than non-Hispanic white infants.ⁱⁱⁱ Poverty also continues to have a significant impact on birth outcomes.

The United States should be the world’s leader on maternal and infant health. In order to do so, we must invest in programs to improve birth outcomes for our most at-risk populations. The Healthy Start Program has a 30-year track record of providing culturally appropriate and effective services to communities with the highest infant mortality rates. March of Dimes strongly supports the reauthorization the Healthy Start Program and offers our endorsement of the *Healthy Start Reauthorization Act of 2019*.

March of Dimes appreciates your leadership on this issue, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to promote the health and well-being of all pregnant women and infants. If we

may be of further assistance, please contact Rebecca Abbott, Deputy Director of Federal Affairs for Public Health, at 202.292.2750 or rabbott@marchofdimes.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stacey D. Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Stacey D. Stewart
President and CEO

cc:

The Honorable Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH)

The Honorable Tim Ryan (D-OH)

The Honorable Steve Stivers (R-OH)

The Honorable Lauren Underwood (D-IL)

ⁱ Kamal R, Hudman, J, McDermott D. "What do we know about infant mortality in the US and comparable countries?" Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker. October 18,2019. Available at <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/infant-mortality-u-s-compare-countries/#item-start>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.