



## *Affordable, Quality Health Coverage and Services for Women, Children and Families*

**The March of Dimes strives to ensure that every mother has a healthy pregnancy and every baby has a healthy start in life. Affordable, quality health coverage and services are essential to realizing this goal.**

Affordable health coverage and quality health services are essential to the health and wellbeing of every person. A substantial body of evidence shows that access to affordable, comprehensive health coverage and good quality health services yields better health for both mothers and babies. An array of federal, state and local programs work together to serve maternal and child health. If access is limited to certain types of care or certain groups of people, the health and economic wellbeing of an entire community can suffer.

Moreover, the health of all people is increasingly interconnected, not just across our nation but across the globe. Outbreaks of infectious disease can move across boundaries as easily as travelers do. The movement of water and air can carry toxins from one community to the next. Disasters and emergencies can strain resources across an entire region and beyond. Even modest reductions in preventive care can make whole communities and generations less healthy. When more babies are born sick, communities may struggle for decades to follow.

The fragmented nature of our health, insurance and public health systems has resulted in a patchwork of programs that are individually and collectively critical to maternal and child health. As a result, changes in one area may have unanticipated consequences for others. When that happens, women and children can find themselves unable to obtain needed care, increasing the risk of poor health outcomes and complications. Policymakers must therefore exercise great care to ensure that changes to programs or funding do not harm the health of mothers and babies by imposing new barriers to care.

The March of Dimes believes that every baby deserves the healthiest possible start in life, which will result in stronger families and a stronger nation. For over 75 years, we have successfully worked with health professionals and policymakers across the political spectrum at the local, state and national levels to improve the health of millions of mothers and children. Today, we employ data and scientific evidence to evaluate proposals that affect maternal and child health. We partner with communities to ensure health programs are delivered to help those families most at risk. Because of this expertise and evidence, the March of Dimes supports efforts to make health coverage and services more widely available, more affordable, higher quality, and more convenient.

The March of Dimes strongly recommends that any changes in public policy be made with the goal of improving the health of all women, children and families. Our positions reflect our expert, evidence-based evaluation of the impact on proposed policy changes on maternal and child health. We look forward to working with all policymakers to achieve our mutual goal of healthy pregnancies and healthy babies.