



## Healthy Start Reauthorization Act of 2016 (H.R. 5369)

The **Healthy Start Reauthorization Act of 2016 (H.R. 5369)** would reauthorize the Healthy Start program, which seeks to reduce infant mortality by improving maternal and infant health in underserved communities. The March of Dimes urges Members of Congress to co-sponsor and support the passage of this important bill.

### Background

- The United States faces staggering rates of racial and ethnic health disparities. In 2013, the infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births for non-Hispanic blacks was 11.1 and 7.6 for American Indian/Alaska Native infants. The rate for non-Hispanic whites was 5.1.
- The Healthy Start program provides grants to community health organizations with the goal of reducing infant mortality. The program places a particular emphasis on non-Hispanic black and American Indian families in an effort to ameliorate disparities in health outcomes.
- Established in 1991, under President George H. W. Bush, Healthy Start was last reauthorized in 2008. The program currently distributes \$103.5 million in funding to grantees each year.
- Grantee organizations provide and coordinate culturally appropriate care for the whole family, from preconception to the infant's second birthday. Each Healthy Start program is unique, tailoring services to meet community need. Examples of services provided include pre- and postnatal care, maternal depression screening, parenting support, and health education.
- 100 Healthy Start programs across 37 states and the District of Columbia serve populations that have an infant mortality rate at least 1.5 times the national average or other poor perinatal outcomes.
- Extensive monitoring and evaluation of outcomes at the local and federal levels ensures the highest quality of programming.

### Key Bill Provisions

- H.R. 5369 would reauthorize Healthy Start grants for community organizations through FY 2022, ensuring grantees can continue their critical work to improve infant and maternal health.
- The bipartisan bill is sponsored by Reps. Tim Ryan (D-OH), Evan Jenkins (R-WV), and John Yarmuth (D-KY).

### Fast Facts

- The infant mortality rate for non-Hispanic blacks is 2.2 times higher than for non-Hispanic whites. American Indian/Alaska Natives have 1.5 times the infant mortality rate of whites.
- The Healthy Start program seeks to reduce infant mortality by providing families in underserved communities with information and support to ensure healthy pregnancies and healthy infants.
- This year, Healthy Start is celebrating its 25th year of improving maternal and child health outcomes.
- Healthy Start was most recently reauthorized in 2008. Its authorization expired in 2013.
- H.R. 5369 will build on past successes in infant and maternal health by continuing to fund effective programs for high-risk populations through FY 2022.

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