



March 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
House Speaker  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer,

On behalf of March of Dimes, the nation's leading non-profit organization fighting for the health of all moms and babies, we write today to encourage you to prioritize the unique needs of pregnant women, new mothers, and infants in our nation's response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). This at-risk population deserves special attention in all response activities.

March of Dimes is pleased that Congress and the Administration are collaborating to quickly advance legislation to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. The *Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020* (P.L. 116-123) will ensure that federal agencies have sufficient resources to develop effective vaccines, diagnostics and treatments; provide technical assistance to public health departments, health care facilities and providers; and support critical national surveillance efforts. The supplemental funding will also guarantee that states, territories, and localities have the necessary funds to prepare, educate the public, provide testing, and effectively respond to reported cases of COVID-19. Additionally, we strongly support H.R. 6201, *The Families First Coronavirus Response Act*, which would provide for free coronavirus testing, establish paid sick days and paid leave for some employees on a limited basis, enhance Unemployment Insurance, expand food security initiatives, and increase federal Medicaid funding among other critical provisions.

March of Dimes strongly urged the Administration to include pregnant women, new moms, and infants in any research and surveillance activities, and incorporate the needs of this population into response activities of federal agencies and its grantees.<sup>i</sup> While much remains unknown about the virus and its effects on pregnant women, they are known to be at greater risk of severe morbidity and mortality from other respiratory infections such as influenza and SARS-CoV. As such, pregnant women should be considered an at-risk population for COVID-19.

Unfortunately, we know from past public health emergencies that pregnant and lactating women are often overlooked as interventions to prevent or treat the disease are developed and distributed. In response, March of Dimes is establishing the **Mom and Baby COVID-19 Intervention and Support Fund** (“The Fund”) to address the urgent need for research, advocacy and education to protect moms, babies and families from COVID-19 and the unknown future effects of the virus.

With Congress now actively working on a third phase COVID-19 stimulus package focused on measures to aid the economy, provide additional emergency funding, and enhance the safety net for Americans, March of Dimes requests that you include the following provisions to assist us in protecting the health of moms and babies — as well as the broader non-profit community — in responding to this national emergency:

1. As mentioned above, March of Dimes recently announced the launch of the Mom and Baby COVID-19 Intervention and Support Fund. The ultimate goal of The Fund is to ensure families stay informed about COVID-19, therapeutics and a vaccine are developed with moms and babies top of mind, and interventions are distributed so everyone across our country has access. The Fund also is designed to be a responsible fundraising mechanism to ensure resources are acquired, deployed and measured to provide the greatest possible positive impact. March of Dimes will establish an external volunteer Advisory Council to provide guidance on the use of the Fund dedicated to research needs. March of Dimes also will provide regular reporting on the use of The Fund toward activities including policy, access, awareness and education. While March of Dimes is seeking private sector partners to help support the Fund, we believe it will only be successful with an infusion of both private and public resources. We ask Congress to include significant new funding in any stimulus package to support non-profits in leveraging their networks and expertise to support COVID-19 response activities.
2. March of Dimes is helping to protect mothers and babies from COVID-19. However, March of Dimes is facing serious pension funding challenges that put our organization’s ability to respond and carry out our mission at risk.

From 2019 to 2020, March of Dimes’ minimum required pension contributions will increase approximately 1,800% - from \$500,000 (2019) to \$8.8 million (2020). By 2021, March of Dimes’ pension contributions will be 9% of the organization’s operating revenue. In fact, March of Dimes was required to contribute \$1.5 million in January for its first quarterly contribution, and subsequent 2020 contributions will be larger. We expect March of Dimes’ pension funding requirements will actually increase in the future because of recent actions by the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates and the precipitous drop in stock markets.

The bipartisan *Protecting Critical Services for Mothers and Babies Act (H.R. 5202/S. 2913)* was introduced in the House of Representatives and the Senate to allow March of

Dimes to elect to be treated as a Cooperative and Small Employer Charity (CSEC) pension plan sponsor, similar to other non-profit organizations. CSEC plan sponsors are permitted to use pension funding rules that are more predictable and consistent. These rules are intended to ensure that designated non-profits can meet their pension obligations while continuing to fulfill their important missions.

March of Dimes requests the Congress include H.R. 5202/S. 2913 in any stimulus package so that we can continue to work on our critical mission of protecting the health of all moms and babies. This targeted relief will help ensure March of Dimes has the financial resources it needs to continue its mission in spite of the projected negative impact of COVID-19 on the broader economy and charitable giving.

3. Just like other industries have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, so has the community engagement and related services of nonprofits that promote and serve a vibrant economy. ASAE reports that meetings and events convened U.S. nonprofit associations annually attract more than 250 million attendees, contribute nearly half a trillion dollars to U.S. gross domestic product, and directly support 5.9 million jobs. Many of those jobs will likely disappear in the coming weeks, as will the jobs and revenues lost as a result of severely diminished donations from fundraising events where many nonprofits earn significant mission dollars through attendance and sponsorships. This spring, March for Dimes will be holding all its annual *March for Babies* fundraising walks as virtual events, and we expect our fall special events season to also be significantly impacted. All of these activities are essential to a healthy economy and deserving of stimulus. We believe any economic stimulus proposals aimed at helping adversely affected industries and geographic areas must also recognize the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the nonprofit sector. As such, we ask that you consider the following as part of any COVID-19 economic stimulus package:
  - Any employment-focused relief or stimulus legislation must expressly apply to employment at tax-exempt organizations by making tax credits and deductions applicable not just to income taxes, but also to the taxes paid by nonprofits, such as unrelated business income taxes and payroll taxes.
  - Funds are needed to pay for the increased costs and demand for services arising because our economy and safety net was not built for a pandemic of this degree.
  - Congress should ensure communities are able to support their local nonprofits during this crisis by enacting a targeted and temporary giving incentive that enables all residents, regardless of whether they claim itemized deductions, to receive a tax incentive for giving to the work of charitable nonprofits responding to, or suffering from, COVID-19.

March of Dimes thanks you for your leadership to protect the nation from the threat of COVID-19. We look forward to working with you to ensure that pregnant women, new mothers and infants are prioritized at every level of the response. Please direct any follow-up questions to KJ Hertz, Director, Federal Affairs (khertz@marchofdimes.org, 571.969.8655).

Sincerely,



Stacey D. Stewart  
President & CEO



Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, MBA, FACP  
Senior Vice President & Chief Medical and Health Officer

CC:

Chairman Bobby Scott, House Education and Labor Committee  
Ranking Member Virginia Foxx, House Education and Labor Committee  
Chairman Richard Neal, House Ways and Means Committee  
Ranking Member, Kevin Brady, House Ways and Means Committee  
Chairman Lamar Alexander, Senate HELP Committee  
Ranking Member, Patty Murray, Senate HELP Committee  
Chairman Chuck Grassley, Senate Finance Committee  
Ranking Member Ron Wyden, Senate Finance Committee  
Chairman Nita Lowey, House Appropriations Committee  
Ranking Member Kay Granger, House Appropriations Committee  
Chairman Richard Shelby, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Ranking Member Patrick Leahy, Senate Appropriations Committee

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<sup>i</sup> March of Dimes letter to Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar, March 5, 2020.  
Available at: <https://www.marchofdimes.org/materials/03-05-20%20March%20of%20Dimes%20Ltr%20to%20Sec%20Azar%20on%20COVID-1.pdf>