

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education & Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education & Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education & Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education & Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

As you develop the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations legislation for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21), we encourage you to provide **a minimum of \$40 million for the Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies** program within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. Further, we recommend that you include the following bill report language:

*Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies.*—The Committee recognizes the innovative work of the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities to track the impact of Zika virus on mothers and babies across the United States and the U.S. Territories. The Committee urges the Center to continue its collaboration with health departments to monitor mothers and babies impacted by Zika virus during pregnancy to better understand how exposure to Zika can affect children as they age. The Committee also urges CDC to continue to adapt its model of mother-to-baby linked data to prevent, detect, respond to, and control other emerging public health threats to mothers and babies and expand the number of jurisdictions receiving support from the Center to implement this model. In particular, the Committee urges CDC to work with health departments to adapt this model to monitor and better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and their babies.

CDC's Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program builds on lessons learned from previous public health emergencies, leverages and strengthens existing public health surveillance capacity to track emerging public health threats to mothers and babies, and informs actions to improve maternal and child health outcomes. The below-listed national organizations support a minimum funding level of \$40 million for FY21, which would enable CDC to expand this program across the country to help communities better protect mothers and babies from ongoing and emerging threats.

Pregnant women, babies, and young children are among the most vulnerable populations during public health emergencies and natural disasters. Recent public health emergencies like the 2016 Zika virus epidemic demonstrated the devastating health outcomes that can result from infectious disease exposures to pregnant women and their babies. There continue to be unanswered questions about the health impacts of the substance use disorder crisis on pregnant women, infants, and children as well as the impacts of exposure to

environmental hazards like lead or perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). As the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues to spread, monitoring of its impact on pregnant women, infants, and children will be imperative. Rapid data collection that links exposures during pregnancy to maternal and child health outcomes can inform public health emergency response activities, guidance to health care providers, and connections to appropriate care and support services for families.

The Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program is a sustainable framework for monitoring the unique impacts of public health emergencies on pregnant women, infants, and children. With sufficient funding, the program could serve as the nation’s preparedness network for mothers and babies that can pivot when new threats emerge. The core focus of the program is a coordinated system of pregnancy and infant public health surveillance and data analysis that views mother and baby as a unit. This enables researchers to more rapidly identify emerging threats to pregnant women and understand impacts on both mothers and infants through childhood. With this data, CDC can work with public health and clinical organizations to quickly provide guidance to families and health care providers on ways to reduce risk to mothers and babies and tailor interventions to improve their long-term health.

The FY20 funding level of \$10 million for the Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program enabled CDC to support 13 jurisdictions, including nine states, two U.S. territories, and two local jurisdictions, to continue public health surveillance of the more than 7,000 infants and children in the United States impacted by Zika virus infection during pregnancy and/or adapt the Zika mother-baby surveillance platform to respond to other infectious diseases, including syphilis and hepatitis C. Thirty jurisdictions applied for the funding to study a range of infectious diseases with severe impacts on maternal and child health populations. With additional funding, CDC could address this significant unmet need by scaling the Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program and implementing the activities required across the country to help protect the nation’s mothers and babies from infectious diseases as well as other ongoing and emerging threats.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to include a minimum of \$40 million for the **Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies** program in FY21 to better protect pregnant women, infants, and children from public health threats.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Heart Association  
American Public Health Association  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
AUCD  
First Focus Campaign for Children

March of Dimes  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National WIC Association  
Prevent Blindness  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Trust for America's Health