

July 13, 2018

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write to express concern over reports that the United States delegation to the recently convened World Health Assembly sought to weaken a resolution designed to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding.

The health benefits of breastfeeding are well-documented through extensive research. As outlined on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Women's Health website, breastfeeding leads to health benefits for children, such as lower rates of obesity, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and asthma. Similarly, breastfeeding has benefits for mothers, such as lower risk for type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancers.

The position presented by the U.S. to the global community contradicts the very public health practices that we promote domestically. Through a variety of federal programs, the U.S. has demonstrated a commitment to providing breastfeeding support to women and their families and invests significant resources to support this position through a variety of programs with a strong history of bipartisan support. For example:

- The Title V Maternal & Child Health Services Block Grant, which is a federal-state partnership for improving the health and well-being of our nation's mothers, children, including children with special needs, and their families, includes a national performance measure related to the percent of infants who were ever breastfed and the percent of infants who were exclusively breastfed through 6 months of age.
- The Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) and Healthy Start programs both feature a benchmark related to breastfeeding.
- The Office of Women's Health promotes a resource entitled "The Business Case for Breastfeeding" to specifically communicate to employers the benefits of supporting breastfeeding employees in the workplace.
- The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, implemented through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service requires state and local agencies to ensure breastfeeding support and assistance is provided.

We respect and recognize that not all women may desire to or have the option to breastfeed. However, the World Health Assembly resolution appropriately included language urging member states to address the *inappropriate* promotion of foods for infants and young children as this practice may be harmful regardless of whether the child is breastfed.

We urge you to continue supporting policies and positions in the global arena that aim to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding just as the federal government does here in the United States.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)

American Association of Directors of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Federation of Teachers

American Medical Women's Association

American Organization of Nurse Executives

American Public Health Association

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health

Association of State Public Health Nutritionists

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses

B.U. Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health

Bixby Center for Population, Health and Sustainability at University of California, Berkeley

Breastfeeding Institute at Wright State University

Center in Social Disparities in Health, University of California, San Francisco

Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health, Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health

Children's Dental Health Project

CityMatCH

Coalition on Human Needs

Every Mother Counts

First Focus

Genetic Alliance

HealthConnect One

March of Dimes

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

National Partnership for Women & Families

National WIC Association

National Women's Health Network

North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition

Nurse-Family Partnership

Organization of Teratology Information Specialists

Parents as Teachers

Prevention Institute

PXE International

Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need

Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness

Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Stanford Children's Health/Lucile Packard Children's Hospital

The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The University of South Florida Center for Excellence in Maternal and Child Health Education, Science
and Practice
Trust for America's Health
UCLA Medicine-Pediatrics
University at Albany School of Public Health
University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health
University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry
Zero to Three

cc: Mr. Garrett Grigsby
Director, Office of Global Affairs
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201