

August 24, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Chairman Cochran, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations dedicated to the health and wellbeing of the nation's children, we write to urge you to include \$165 million in funding for the Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) Program in the Senate Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

From conception through adulthood, children grow and develop rapidly, and we have an increasing understanding that the environment in which they live—with its physical, chemical, biological, and psychosocial influences—has a significant impact on their health and development. We know that children are not simply “little adults,” but have very different psychological responses to environmental influences than adults. The ECHO program is designed to investigate these influences to determine how they underpin the foundations of child health and how they impact an individual's long term health. By answering crucial questions about the childhood antecedents of the costly diseases of adulthood, we can improve treatment, better prevent illness, and increase the health of the population across the lifespan.

The ECHO program funds research activities in 44 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico and brings together 84 existing longitudinal cohort studies of children. By using studies already in place and that have already proven successful, the ECHO program is poised to quickly and efficiently deliver important insights into child development.

In addition, ECHO has prioritized four key areas of pediatric outcomes, including asthma, obesity, autism, and obstetric and neonatal outcomes, in order to ensure that this research is meaningful in addressing some of the most common ailments among children. In addition, the study will also be looking at the impact of the environment on measures of healthy child development.

The ECHO program also includes an IDeA States Pediatric Clinical Trials Network focused on ensuring that children in rural and medically underserved locations can participate in state-of-the-art clinical trials. The network has sites in 17 states and utilizes states targeted by the NIH Institutional Development Awards (IDeA) Program, which is designed to broaden the geographic distribution of biomedical and behavioral research. This will not only ensure access to world-class care for children and

their families, but ensure that the research reflects a broad spectrum of both environments and participants.

We urge you to continue to support this important research initiative to improve the health of children.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Pediatric Society
American Psychological Association
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Thoracic Society
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of Population Centers
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Child Neurology Society
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Human Animal Bond Research Institute
March of Dimes
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Environmental Health Association
National Hispanic Medical Association
Nemours Children's Health System
North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
Pediatric Policy Council
Population Association of America
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
Society for Research in Child Development
Teratology Society
The Obesity Society
ZERO TO THREE