

November 27, 2019

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 work to finalize the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations legislation for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20), we encourage you to provide **a minimum of \$10 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, which was included in the bill report that accompanied the FY20 Labor-HHS appropriations legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in June 2019:

Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies.—The Committee recognizes the innovative work of the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, and also recognizes the threat that the Zika virus continues to pose to mothers and babies across the United States and the U.S. Territories. The Committee urges the Center to continue to track mothers and infants to better understand how exposure to Zika and other emerging threats can affect children as they age.

CDC's Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program builds on lessons learned from previous public health emergencies, leverages 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 \$10 million for FY20, which matches the amount included in the President's FY20 Budget Request, the House-passed FY20 Labor-HHS appropriations legislation, and the draft Senate FY20 Labor-HHS appropriations legislation, and would constitute level funding compared to the amount appropriated to the program in Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19).

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 2015-2016 Zika

virus epidemic demonstrated the devastating health outcomes that can result from infectious disease exposures to pregnant women and their babies. Environmental hazards like lead or perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and harmful substances like opioids also pose unique risks to pregnant women, infants, and children. 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.

Building on the public health response to the Zika virus epidemic, CDC established the Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program in FY19 to create a sustainable framework for monitoring the unique impacts of public health emergencies on pregnant women, infants, and children. The core focus of the program is a coordinated system of pregnancy surveillance, birth defects 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 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 FY19 funding for the Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program enabled CDC to support 13 jurisdictions, including six states, two U.S. territories, and two local jurisdictions, to continue 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. Many more than the 13 funded jurisdictions applied for the FY19 funding and proposed to study additional infectious diseases with severe impacts on maternal and child health populations. Although 64 U.S. jurisdictions were eligible for the FY19 funding, CDC could only support 13 jurisdictions with the current funding level of \$10 million.

With additional funding, CDC could scale the Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program and implement the activities required across the country to help protect the nation's mothers and babies from ongoing and emerging threats. This approach would help to ensure that public health and clinical communities have the data and tools they need to act early to protect mothers and babies from the next public health crisis. It could also be leveraged to meet the ongoing needs of states and communities in better understanding the short- and long-term impacts on mothers and babies of various exposures during pregnancy, including those related to opioid use during pregnancy, environmental hazards, natural disasters, and infectious diseases.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to include a minimum of \$10 million for the **Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies** program in FY20 to better protect pregnant women, infants, and children from public health threats.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Families USA
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