



Investment Needed to Reduce Maternal Mortality in the U.S.

Washington, D.C., May 19 - Michael Fraser, Ph.D., CEO of the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP), issued this statement today in conjunction with the Democratic Women's Working Group rally to honor the lives of women around the world, and demonstrate U.S. Congressional commitment to reduce maternal mortality here at home and throughout the world:

“AMCHP is deeply appreciative of the leadership the members of the Democratic Women's Working Group are demonstrating today on the issue of maternal mortality. One of the marks of any truly great society is how well it cares for the health of its mothers and children. On this count, the U.S. is not yet living up to its potential to assure that all women have the best chance for optimal health both before and during pregnancy,” said Fraser.

In 2005, over 600 women died of pregnancy-related complications in the United States. Although the number of such deaths has decreased dramatically since over the past century, there has been no significant decrease in the U.S. maternal mortality rate over the last 15 years, and the U.S. recently ranked 41st in an analysis of maternal mortality rates in 171 countries. Additionally, truly awful racial disparities persist with black women having a nearly four times higher risk of dying from pregnancy-related complications than white women.

According to Dr. Fraser, “While progress has stalled, domestic funding for key public health programs assuring the health of women has been eroding. Funding for the Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services Block Grant, for example, has been cut over \$60 million since 2002. Though authorized at \$850 million, this vital federal-state program is currently funded at only \$666 million - not nearly enough to support the programs focused on promoting the health of the nation's women and children.”

There is a strong need for increased investment in existing Title V MCH programs that address the issue of maternal health in the U.S. by:

- Promoting the health and wellness of women, including before, during and after pregnancy,
- Assuring access to prenatal care,
- Promoting access to quality and affordable health insurance,
- Reducing the leading causes of maternal mortality including diabetes and hypertension,
- Helping reducing violence against women, particularly those who are pregnant or have just given birth; and

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- Reducing under reported or underestimated rates of maternal mortality by supporting state surveillance systems that help track and identify maternal mortality rates, as well as supporting prevention programs.

“AMCHP supports increased investments internationally, and also calls upon Congress to fully fund the MCH Block Grant at \$850 million in FY 2009 to allow states to expand their outreach and ability to serve the health needs of women,” said Fraser.

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AMCHP is the national organization representing state public health leaders and others working to improve the health and well-being of women, children and youth, including those with special health care needs, and families. For more information, visit www.amchp.org or contact Brent Ewig, Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs at bewig@amchp.org or 202-775-0436.