

(Place on letterhead)

June 2009

The Honorable XX
XX
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Representative X:

As you continue deliberations on the FY 2010 appropriations process, we are asking for your help and leadership in securing full funding for the Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services Block Grant. Full funding at the authorized level of \$850 million will enable all states and territories to provide vital public health and health care services to millions of women, infants and children, including children and youth with special health care needs.

The Title V MCH Block Grant provides vital funding that supports a strong foundation for the public health efforts to improve the lives of women, children, and families in [your state]. However, years of flat or reduced funding are creating significant challenges in meeting the needs of vulnerable mothers and children in [your state] and across the country.

Seven years ago, Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services Block Grant funding peaked at \$731 million. The FY 2009 omnibus appropriations bill set MCH Block Grant funding to \$662 million. This erosion in federal support threatens the progress states have made in improving the health of mothers, children, and families, and has required cutbacks in needed services and systems at the state and local level [*may want to highlight cuts made here, with special emphasis on individual constituents no longer receiving services.*]

Despite remarkable success in improving the health of mothers and children over the past half century, recent data raise critical concerns that our rate of progress may be slowing and even reversing. Consider that:

- Improvements in reducing infant mortality have stalled as preterm and low birth weight births have increased. The U.S. currently ranks 29th in infant mortality rates in international comparisons.
- Racial and ethnic disparities persist across several indicators, with the black infant mortality rate double the rate for whites.
- Maternal mortality rates have not improved in recent decades.
- Childhood obesity is a national epidemic, with some age groups experiencing a three fold obesity rate increase in rates over the past two decades.
- Teen birth rates recently rose for the second time in 14 years.

[Consider adding some examples of Title V funded activities in your state, as well as leading health needs that could be addressed with additional resources]

The MCH Block Grant is the only Federal program that focuses solely on improving the health of all of our nation's mothers and children. All state and territorial health agencies and their partners use MCH Block Grant resources and the required state match to reduce infant mortality, deliver services to children and youth with special health care needs, support prenatal and postnatal care, screen newborns for genetic and hereditary health conditions, assure the delivery of childhood immunizations, and prevent childhood injuries. MCH Block Grant funding also assists states in addressing critical health workforce needs, including the training of health professionals, and supports the development and testing of innovative public health practices.

We strongly urge you to fully fund the Title V MCH Block Grant at \$850 million. Your support of this vital program is appreciated.

Sincerely,