As the new President and Congress take office in 2017, the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) offers the following recommendations to help guide a policy agenda that can begin in the first 100 days to improve the health of all women, children and families, including those with special health care needs.

The following recommendations were created by AMCHP’s Legislative and Health Care Finance Committee, and approved by our Board of Directors. For additional information, please contact Brent Ewig in AMCHP’s Policy and Government Affairs department at bewig@amchp.org or 202-266-3041.
Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act
To improve and expand comprehensive state newborn screening systems, Congress and the President should provide funding at the authorized level of $19.9 million to implement the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act.

Autism CARES Act
To improve screening and services for children with developmental disabilities, Congress and the President should fund the authorized level of $260 million to implement the Autism CARES Act.

PREEMIE Act
To expand studies on the biological, medical and socio-economic factors associated with preterm birth, Congress and the President should fund the PREEMIE Act at the authorized level of $2.8 million. Each year, more than a half million babies are born preterm and these births cost the nation over $26 billion.

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative
To accelerate progress in reducing teen pregnancies, Congress and the President should fund the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative at $130 million to expand medically accurate and age-appropriate programs that reduce teen pregnancy and associated risk behaviors, and to cover costs associated with administering and evaluating the program.

Support Family Planning Programs Through Title X
To provide high-quality family planning services and other preventive health care to low-income or uninsured individuals who might otherwise lack access to health care, Congress and the President should fund the Title X Family Planning Program at $737 million.

Provide Continued Funding to Address the Zika Virus Emergency
To assure a coordinated federal, state and local response to the Zika virus, Congress and the President should assess lessons learned from current efforts and pass adequate funding to sustain and expand effective surveillance, prevention, and care for affected families.

Provide Adequate Resources for Substance Abuse/Opioids/Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Prevention and Treatment Programs
To address the opioid epidemic, the President should propose and Congress should appropriate adequate funds to implement the recently passed Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act.
**Improve Mental Health Services for Women, Children and Families**

To promote access to maternal depression and mental health screening, Congress and the President should continue to support pathways to screening and treatment for maternal depression through the Medicaid Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) option and the Affordable Care Act’s Essential Health Benefits (EHB) provision. Additionally, Congress should pass, and the President should sign into law, the Bringing Postpartum Depression out of the Shadows Act, which would improve screening and treatment for women with postpartum depression.

**Prevention**

To increase the availability of preventive and health promotion services for all states and communities, the Congress and President should make strategic investments in the budget of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), particularly in the areas of adolescent and school health, birth defects and developmental disabilities, chronic disease, immunization, labs, injury prevention, HIV and STD prevention, and tobacco control. Additionally, Congress and the President should oppose attempts to repeal the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) or use it as an offset for other priorities. The PPHF should be used to invest in innovative public health programs, not merely used to cover gaps in the CDC’s budget.

**Lead Poisoning**

To reduce environmental threats to children’s health, funding for Lead Poisoning Prevention Programs at both the CDC and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) should be restored and expanded.

**Strengthen Families Through Paid Leave**

To support better maternal mental and physical health, better prenatal and postnatal care, promote breastfeeding and greater parent/infant bonding, Congress and the President should create a federal guarantee of paid parental leave. To promote greater utilization of preventive care, reduce the potential for spreading infectious disease, and allow families to care for loved ones while earning a living, paid sick leave should also be guaranteed for all workers.

**Repeal Sequestration**

To prevent the further erosion of funding for critical programs that address America’s pressing public health needs, Congress and the President should repeal sequestration, which is slated to return in 2018. Non-defense discretionary programs have borne the brunt of austerity measures in recent years to the detriment of public health.

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**Access Priorities**

**Finish the Job on Universal Health Insurance Coverage for Children, Expand Affordable Health Insurance Coverage to Adults, and Improve Access for Mothers, Children and Families**

**To improve health care access,** Congress should promptly reauthorize the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) with adequate funds for states to cover all eligible children, expand coverage as appropriate and cover pregnant women without needing a waiver.

**To promote health insurance coverage,** Congress should pass and the President should sign legislation that provides adequate resources for outreach and enrollment, and support express lane eligibility to further simplify enrollment procedures.

**To guarantee coverage throughout the prenatal period,** Congress should pass and the President should sign the Healthy Maternity and Obstetric Medicine (Healthy MOM) Act, which designates pregnancy as a Qualifying Life Event that would trigger a special enrollment period for pregnant women to enroll in health insurance coverage through the Marketplaces, group health plans and the Federal Employee Health Benefits system.

**To promote family-centered, community-based, coordinated care for children, particularly those with special health care needs,** Congress and the President should improve financing for high-quality, team-based medical and mental health care delivered in a medical home model that incorporates Bright Futures guidelines and EPSDT services.

**To improve the affordability and adequacy of health insurance coverage,** especially for families of children with special health care needs, Congress and the Administration should support continued assessment and monitoring via the National Survey of Children’s Health, and utilize oversight authorities to analyze and address gaps.

**To improve access to coverage for families,** Congress and the President should pass legislation to amend the “family glitch” by defining health plan affordability based on the total cost to enroll a family rather than the price of individual coverage.

**To improve utilization of clinical preventive services,** Congress and the Administration should promote recommended services, assess gaps and barriers, and spread best practices.
To promote continuous coverage and thereby secure preconception and interconception care for women across the reproductive lifespan, Congress and the Administration should examine the health outcomes and economic benefits of expanded Medicaid and extend pregnancy-related Medicaid coverage beyond 60 days post-partum.

To strengthen quality assurance and network adequacy standards, Congress and the Administration should fully fund state oversight functions and support the voluntary adoption of the National Standards for Systems of Care for Children with Special Health Care Needs.

To support the development of networks and the integration of behavioral and physical health services, Congress should provide adequate resources to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to expand Project LAUNCH and other efforts to enable states to improve access to mental health and substance abuse services for pregnant women, mothers and children, and protect funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Block Grant.

Public Health Legislation

Extend Critical Components of the Title V MCH Program
To prevent disruption in critical MCH services, the President should propose and Congress expeditiously act to reauthorize three critical components of the Title V statute that will expire unless Congress acts by Sept. 30, 2017. The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV), the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP), and Family-to-Family Health Information Centers (F2F-HICs) each work in concert with the Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant to enable states to ensure a continuum of services and supports to improve the health of our nation’s mothers, children and families, including children and youth with special health care needs.

Anticipate and Adequately Fund Public Health Emergencies
To prevent a repeat of intolerable delays in funding public health emergencies as recently occurred with Zika, the President and Congress should adequately fund ongoing public health preparedness programs and create a standing FEMA-like fund that the HHS Secretary can draw from immediately upon the declaration of a public health emergency to adequately fund federal, state and local responses.

Reauthorize and Strengthen the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program
To assure quality nutrition services to mothers and children, Congress should reauthorize the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) in accordance with recommendations made by the National WIC Association and provide $6.37 billion in funding, including the fully authorized amount for breastfeeding peer counselors and increased funding to be able to boost the fully breastfeeding food package by $2 for fruit and vegetable cash value vouchers.

Reverse the Obesity Epidemic
To address the rampant national obesity epidemic, Congress and the President should create an interagency task force to develop and be accountable for implementing a national plan to halt and reverse the obesity epidemic, and pass legislation authorizing resources for states to develop and test public health approaches to promote healthy eating and active living.

Address Childhood Injuries
To address the leading cause of death in children, Congress and the President should develop and fund a national program to reduce both intentional and unintentional childhood injuries by expanding state programs that implement evidence-based injury prevention programs and policies.

MCH Leadership Priorities

To improve efficiency and reduce administrative burdens, the President should order a top-to-bottom review of every federal agency’s grant processes to state and local governments with the goal of identifying opportunities to streamline application processes, align performance measures, coordinate oversight and reduce duplicative reporting requirements. Estimates from the White House Office of Management and Budget show that state MCH leaders spend hundreds of hours every year simply applying for and reporting on numerous grants.

To create a national agenda for improving maternal and child health, the President should convene a White House Conference on Children. This conference would emulate the first White House Conference on Children held in 1909, and assure broad stakeholder involvement to create and implement an agenda to improve the health of women, children and families over the next five to 10 years.