Maternal & Child Health Advocates Decry Impact of Proposed Budget Cuts on Women, Children and Families

Washington, DC – Five of the nation’s leading maternal and child health organizations vehemently oppose the dramatically reduced budget allocation proposed by the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 labor, health and education spending bill. The Committee’s decision to shift all of the automatic budget cuts (known as sequestration) to non-defense discretionary programs in FY 2014 would severely jeopardize the health and well-being of women, children and their families.

The nearly 19 percent proposed cut in overall spending for the labor, health and education bill, coupled with the existing five percent cut already implemented for FY 2013, would devastate already fragile budgets for programs that support public health and prevention, life-saving research, childhood immunizations and maternal, infant and early childhood home visitation, among many others.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP), March of Dimes and the National WIC Association (NWA) stand in strong unified opposition to the House Appropriations Committee’s FY 2014 allocations and urge Congress to invest in maternal and child health programs in the next fiscal year and beyond.
Organization statements:

AAP

“At a time when child poverty is at an all-time high, the budget allocations put forth by the House Appropriations Committee do nothing to mitigate its impacts,” said AAP President Thomas K. McInerny, MD, FAAP. “In fact, further cutting maternal and child health programs that provide lifeline services to vulnerable families, such as preventive health screenings, childhood immunizations, the pediatric workforce, early education and medical research innovations, not only yields no economic benefit, but jeopardizes the very programs designed to help lift children and families out of poverty. These programs are already operating at historically low levels and represent a fraction of our overall federal budget. On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the 60,000 pediatricians we represent, I have one message for Congress: it is time to stop valuing children less and instead start putting children first in federal spending.”

ACOG

“Our nation is struggling to address high and growing rates of chronic diseases, including diabetes and obesity. The last thing we should do right now is to slash our public health infrastructure,” said ACOG President Jeanne A. Conry, MD, PhD, FACOG. “Investment in research is absolutely vital to help us develop treatments and interventions for disease, and public health programs are critical to bringing those treatments into practice. Federally-funded research helps inform clinical guidance our ob-gyns use every day to keep women healthy, and we rely on partnerships with the CDC, HRSA, and other federal agencies to help educate providers about best practices and help educate women about healthy behaviors. Today's cuts to these federal investments will take years to recoup and set back progress in keeping our Nation’s women and families healthy.”

AMCHP

“It is deplorable that Congress refuses to have the conversation about the true drivers of our debt and deficit,” said Dr. Michael Fraser, Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs. “Instead they choose to take the ‘easy way out’ and cut spending for discretionary health, education and labor programs while canceling sequestration for the Department of Defense. These debilitating cuts to health programs will be felt for decades to come. The House allocations jeopardize the health of women and children, which will result in higher health care costs down the road.”

March of Dimes

“We’re extremely disappointed with the House 302(b) allocations for the Department of Health and Human Services,” said March of Dimes President Dr. Jennifer L. Howse. “There is no question that difficult decisions must be made about our nation’s budgetary priorities. Such decisions, however, should focus on building strong, healthy children and families to foster our nation’s future. We cannot expect to remain economically competitive or secure if we slash investments in lifesaving research and
essential services like prenatal and well-child care, immunizations, and supportive services for children with birth defects and their families.”

**National WIC Association**

“Thoughtful budgeting requires consideration of the consequences. The irrational concern about the nation’s debt impact on future generations, fails to recognize the critical need to care for vulnerable children in our midst,” said NWA President and CEO Rev. Douglas Greenaway. “To what end is the future if we fail those with immediate need? Every indicator points to a rapidly receding national debt. To needlessly penalize children in need of quality nutrition and other preventive health care is a travesty of justice. Damaging people’s lives, the nation’s health care infrastructure, failing to invest in medical research, to assure critical public health awareness will only further harm already fragile families and further injure our struggling economy.”

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.* [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

*The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (The College), a 501(c)(3) organization, is the nation’s leading group of physicians providing health care for women. As a private, voluntary, nonprofit membership organization of approximately 57,000 members, The College strongly advocates for quality health care for women, maintains the highest standards of clinical practice and continuing education of its members, promotes patient education, and increases awareness among its members and the public of the changing issues facing women’s health care. The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), a 501(c)(6) organization, is its companion organization.* [www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)

*AMCHP’s mission is to support state maternal and child health programs and provide national leadership on issues affecting women and children. For more information, please contact Brent Ewig, Director of Policy, at bewig@amchp.org or call (202) 226.3041.*

*The March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose volunteers and staff work to improve the health of infants and children by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes funds programs of research, community services, education and advocacy. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.com or nacersano.org.*
The National WIC Association, NWA, is a non-profit representing the nearly 9 million mothers and young children participating in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the nation’s 12,200 dedicated WIC service provider agencies.