

March 16, 2010

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128, Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A, Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS and Education
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Inouye, Cochran and Harkin and Representatives Obey and Lewis and Tiahrt:

The undersigned organizations, which represent a broad coalition committed to the health and wellbeing of children, mothers and families, urge Congress to undertake a concerted, multi-faceted effort to promote breastfeeding through the establishment of an Interagency Work Group on Breastfeeding coordinated by the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Services. We also urge you to provide funding of \$15 million per year specified for breastfeeding programs. This funding, along with strong central leadership from an Interagency Work Group, is necessary to make substantial gains in our nation's breastfeeding rates.

Lack of breastfeeding increases the risk of a wide variety of acute and chronic diseases in children and adults. Research shows that suboptimal breastfeeding duration is an important contributor to our nation's epidemic of childhood obesity. Research also shows that suboptimal breastfeeding duration increases the risk of maternal breast cancer, maternal cardiovascular disease and maternal diabetes. A cost analysis now in press shows that the United States incurs at least \$13 billion per year in excess costs due to pediatric illness because of our suboptimal rates of breastfeeding.

Our nation's current breastfeeding rates fall far short of the universal medical recommendation to breastfeed exclusively for six months with continued breastfeeding for as long as desired by mother and child. In addition, enormous disparities exist across ethnic and geographic lines; groups with some of our poorest health outcomes have some of the lowest breastfeeding rates, such as Americans in the Southeastern states, and African-Americans all across the US.

Today, the only line-items in the federal budget dedicated specifically to breastfeeding are the peer-counseling program and state breastfeeding performance bonus grants under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC). While other

federal programs may address breastfeeding, these efforts are not directed by Congress and are subject to the shifting priorities of Administrations and political leadership.

We are therefore calling upon Congress to dedicate new sustainable line-item funding to breastfeeding in order to raise our nation's rates to approach the levels recommended by major national and international health organizations. Funding is required for strong central federal government leadership to strategically coordinate, develop and implement plans to accomplish the following:

- a) Transform the maternity care and infant feeding practices of our maternity facilities into fully evidence-based interventions (e.g., the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding), including health-professional education.
- b) Help shift social norms to ensure that breastfeeding is supported as the healthiest choice for infants and mothers.
- c) Support practices that allow working women to continue to breastfeed.
- d) Ensure sustainable federal oversight in all agencies that address maternal or child health with funding to carry out the necessary research, services and education.

We urge that this \$15 million be directed to the office of the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The Interagency Work Group on Breastfeeding, would then serve as the coordinating body that makes recommendations to the Secretary and departmental and agency leaders as to how to allocate these funds for research, education, and services in order to accomplish breastfeeding goals. At least one-third of the funds should be used to improve maternity care practices such as through building hospital collaboratives and training programs. Agencies that should participate in this council include but are not limited to the Department of Health and Human Services (including agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Office on Women's Health, the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, the Administration on Children and Families, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the Indian Health Service), the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Labor, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Education, and Veterans' Affairs.

We believe that this new funding and the Interagency Work Group represent a sensible, cost-effective approach to coordinating and enhancing the federal government's efforts to promote and support breastfeeding. Given the well-documented health benefits of breastfeeding for mothers and babies, this Work Group is an investment that will produce measurable dividends many times over in improved health across our nation.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. For further information, please contact Dr. Melissa Bartick, one of the American Public Health Association's representatives to the US Breastfeeding Committee, at melissabartick@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

National Organizations

Academy for Educational Development
African-American Breastfeeding Alliance
Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics
American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Breastfeeding Institute
American College of Nurse Midwives
American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)
American Dietetic Association
American Public Health Association
AnotherLook
Association of Teachers of Maternal and Child Health
Baby-Friendly USA
Best for Babes® Foundation
Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Association
Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute
Coalition for Improving Maternity Services
Every Mother, Inc
Healthy Children Project
International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners
International Childbirth Education Association
La Leche League International
Lamaze International
National Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition
National Indian Health Board
National Inter Tribal Breastfeeding Council
National WIC Association
Project Concern International
United States Breastfeeding Committee
United States Lactation Consultant Association
Wellstart International

State, Local and Tribal Organizations

Alabama Breastfeeding Committee
Alaska Breastfeeding Coalition
Arizona Breastfeeding Coalition
Arkansas Breastfeeding Coalition
Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware
Breastfeeding Coalition of Oregon
Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles
Breastfeeding Taskforce of Nevada
California Breastfeeding Coalition
California WIC Association
Central Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition
Coalition of Oklahoma Breastfeeding Advocates
Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Breastfeeding Coalition
Community Health Partnership: Oregon's Public Health Institute
Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition
DC Breastfeeding Coalition

Florida Breastfeeding Coalition
Georgia Breastfeeding Coalition
Hawaii Breastfeeding Coalition
Indiana Perinatal Network
Iowa Lactation Task Force
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition
Louisiana Breastfeeding Coalition
Louisiana Maternal and Child Health Coalition
Maine Breastfeeding Coalition
Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition
Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition
Michigan Breastfeeding Coalition
Milwaukee County Breastfeeding Coalition (WI)
Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition
Mississippi Breastfeeding Coalition
Mississippi Perinatal Association
Missouri Breastfeeding Coalition
Native Breastfeeding Council of Sonoma County (CA)
Navajo Nation Breastfeeding Coalition (AZ)
New Hampshire Breastfeeding Task Force
New Jersey Breastfeeding Coalition
New Mexico Breastfeeding Task Force
New York State Association of Licensed Midwives
New York State Breastfeeding Coalition
North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition
Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance
Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Coalition
Rhode Island Breastfeeding Coalition
South Carolina Breastfeeding Action Committee
South Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition
South Dakota Breastfeeding Coalition
Tennessee Breastfeeding Coalition
Texas Breastfeeding Coalition
Utah Breastfeeding Coalition
Vermont Breastfeeding Network
Vermont Lactation Consultant Association
West Virginia Breastfeeding Alliance
WithinReach, Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington
Wyoming Breastfeeding Coalition

Cc: The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Dr. Howard Koh