

August 25, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations dedicated to the health and wellbeing of the nation's children, we write to thank you for including funding for an alternative to the National Children's Study in the Senate and House Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bills, and we strongly urge the inclusion of this funding in any final appropriations bill passed by Congress.

Although the National Children's Study (NCS) was terminated by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) last year, we strongly believe that the mission and goals of this study, as outlined in the *Children's Health Act of 2000* in authorizing the NCS, remain as important today as they were 14 years ago. We now understand that the effects of physical and social environments on health begin earlier and reach farther than we had ever imagined. We must work now with even greater commitment and urgency to better understand the precursors of child and adult disease in order to develop new treatment and prevention strategies that will improve the health of the entire population.

Moreover, we believe it is important to build upon the scientific knowledge forming our understanding of the childhood antecedents of adult disease by examining a wide range of environmental influences, including behavioral, social, physical, chemical, and biological factors, from before birth through adolescence and into adulthood. This inquiry should leverage new methods and technologies to gather information on a spectrum of critical issues for child health. Given the plethora of scientific discoveries that have been made since 2000 (due in large part to research stimulated by the NCS vision), achieving these goals through a realigned NCS has never been more important. We are confident that the medical and scientific community will be able to carry out a new research initiative to greatly improve child health by investigating the links between environmental influences and child development.

In order to advance our understanding of child health and development as quickly as possible, we believe several components must be in place to ensure this endeavor can move forward rapidly and smoothly:

- In developing and guiding the new initiative plan, the NIH should utilize a formal scientific advisory mechanism that includes experts from all appropriate fields, patient representatives, and other stakeholders.
- The initiative should be longitudinal in nature, and should focus strongly on innovative approaches and technologies.
- The initiative should be directed to focus initially on conditions with high public health impact such as prematurity and other adverse birth outcomes, obesity, autism, asthma, and mental health disorders.
- NIH should be directed to ensure that these funds supplement and do not supplant ongoing or planned children's health research.
- The initiative should be subject to regular independent review from an entity such as the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

Thank you for your sustained support of child health research. If we may provide further information or assistance, please contact James Baumberger with the American Academy of Pediatrics at jbaumberger@aap.org or James Gelfand with the March of Dimes at JGelfand@marchofdimes.org.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association for Clinical Chemistry
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Pediatric Society
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Bone and Mineral Research
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Thoracic Society
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Population Centers
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Child Neurology Society
Children's Health Fund

Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
Family Voices
First Focus
March of Dimes
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness
National Hispanic Medical Association
North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
Organic Acidemia Association
Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation
Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases
Pediatric Policy Council
Population Association of America
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
Society for the Study of Reproduction