

May 5, 2006

Hon. Arlen Specter  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Tom Harkin  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin:

We are writing to request that you provide funding to continue the National Children's Study (NCS) in fiscal year 2007. The Children's Health Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-310) authorized the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to lead a consortium of relevant government agencies, university researchers and others in undertaking an ambitious long-term study of American children's health and their subsequent development.

In fiscal year 2006, the participating agencies are contributing approximately \$12 million to support planning and feasibility work. Seven Vanguard sites, which include universities, hospitals, health departments and other organizations, have been funded to pilot and complete the first phases of the study. The full nationwide study would follow a representative sample of 100,000 children from early life through adulthood examining the potential impacts of a broad range of environmental influences (physical, chemical, biological and social) to seek the root causes of many childhood and adult diseases. The study needs \$69 million in FY 2007 to move forward, without these funds, NICHD will be forced to cancel this important work to improve children's health.

The cost of the study is dwarfed by the cost of treating the diseases and conditions it can be expected to address, including asthma, obesity, infant mortality, autism, heart disease, and many other childhood illnesses. The success of other longitudinal studies of similar scope—from the Framingham Heart Study, launched in 1948, to the Women's Health Initiative—show the value of such studies. NICHD estimates that the major chronic diseases the study will address directly cost America \$269 billion per year. If the study were to result in only a 1% reduction in those costs, the expense of the entire twenty-plus year study could be recouped in a single year.

While we recognize that federal resources are extremely constrained and that this will be a difficult undertaking, we feel it is crucial that Congress provide the necessary funding to implement this study and thereby demonstrate its commitment to this extremely valuable research and to America's children.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Ambulatory Pediatric Association  
American Chemistry Council  
American Pediatric Society  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Academy of Sleep Medicine  
American Anthropological Association  
American Association for Clinical Chemistry  
American Association on Mental Retardation  
American Heart Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
American Sociological Association  
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
Arthritis Foundation  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetrics and Neonatal Nurses  
Autism Speaks  
Catholic Charities USA  
Catholic Health Association of the United States  
Catholic Healthcare West  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Consortium of Social Science Association  
Cooley's Anemia Foundation  
Easter Seals  
Family Voices  
First Candle  
FRAXA Research Foundation  
Jeffrey Modell Foundation  
Learning Disabilities Association of America  
March of Dimes  
National Assembly on School-Based Health Care  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association of Children's Hospitals  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Catholic Partnership on Disability  
National Catholic Rural Life Conference  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Council of Catholic Women  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Osteoporosis Foundation  
National Mental Health Association  
Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation

Population Association of America  
Reproductive Health Technologies Project  
RESOLVE: the National Infertility Association  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Society for Pediatric Research  
Society for Women's Health Research  
Spina Bifida Association  
The Arc of the United States  
The Endocrine Society  
United Cerebral Palsy  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Voices for America's Children