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 for 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 Downs 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