



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2010

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Labor/HHS/Ed Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We are writing to request \$120 million for the Healthy Start program in your FY11 Labor/HHS/Ed and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. This amount is equal to the authorization level included in the Healthy Start Reauthorization Act, which passed Congress and was signed into law in October, 2008.

Healthy Start funds a network of 102 community-based programs designed to reduce infant mortality and support disadvantaged pregnant women. Healthy Start programs are found in both urban and rural areas and focus on reducing infant mortality, reducing the incidence of low birthweight babies and eliminating racial disparities in perinatal outcomes. Healthy Start programs serve pregnant women and families by providing outreach, home visits, case management, health education, perinatal depression screening, interconceptional care and other effective approaches to ensure the birth of a healthy newborn child.

\$120 million is required in order to expand the program into additional qualified areas and also provide support to existing program sites. The existing community-based Healthy Start program sites have shown to be effective at reducing infant mortality and the number of low birthweight infants. An assessment of the program from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) stated, "Healthy Start is designed in a manner that ensures resources are being used directly and effectively to meet the program's purpose."

Continued investment in Healthy Start will reduce overall federal costs associated with the expensive medical treatments that low birthweight infants require. Supporting community-based Healthy Start programs now will prevent future spending on Medicaid, special education and a myriad of other social services that are needed for infants with special health care needs. Knowing the negative impact of low birthweight on future academic achievement, Healthy Start is also an integral component of a comprehensive strategy focused on early childhood education.

Again, we urge you to include a minimum of \$120 million for the Healthy Start program in the FY11 Labor/HHS/Ed Appropriations bill

Sincerely,

John M. Spratt, Jr.
Member of Congress

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