

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

March 30, 2017

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

Thank you for your commitment to fiscal responsibility and to ensure that despite a challenging budget environment, our nation's priorities are addressed. We share your interest in preserving effective, evidence-based, and sustainable poverty-focused foreign assistance that saves lives and creates economic stability in developing countries. We also appreciate the leadership you took last year to ensure substantial support for Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and Nutrition efforts globally. As you begin to consider the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2018, we strongly urge you to allocate robust funding for MCH – including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and Nutrition in Global Health.

These investments in MCH and Nutrition build the foundation for the U.S. goal of ending preventable child and maternal deaths within a generation globally. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has developed benchmark targets for that goal and an evidence-based roadmap to save an additional 15 million child lives and 600,000 women's lives by the year 2020. There is consensus among scientists and global health experts that this is possible. But achieving this bold goal requires Congressional support for critical child survival and nutrition programs.

By continuing strong U.S. leadership, and in close collaboration with partner countries, we are seeing real and measurable progress. The annual number of under-five deaths has drastically fallen from 12.6 million in 1990 to 5.9 million in 2015. Additionally, in the 25 countries where U.S. involvement has been the greatest, maternal mortality has declined an average of 5 percent each year, faster than the global average.

While great strides have been made to increase maternal, newborn and child health, the world is not yet on track to meet the goal of ending preventable child and maternal deaths within a generation globally. Each day, approximately 800 women, almost entirely from developing countries, die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

Additionally, each day, over 16,000 children, who are under the age of five, die of preventable and treatable conditions such as prematurity, pneumonia and diarrhea — with malnutrition being the underlying cause in 45 percent of those deaths. Newborn deaths are also a growing proportion of child mortality, with one million children dying on the day they are born. Moreover, when a mother dies, her children are less likely to go to school, get immunized, and have access to good nutrition, and they are up to 10 times more likely to die in childhood than children whose mothers are alive.

Our nation's MCH and Nutrition programs allow for the delivery of low cost, life-saving services for newborns, children, and mothers throughout the developing world. These programs provide access to skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care; training for frontline health workers; clean water, sanitation, and hygiene; life-saving health commodities; and research and development of new lifesaving tools.

These accounts also support Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which provides new and underutilized vaccines to developing countries, global polio eradication and measles elimination efforts, and nutrition-specific programs for women and children, especially in the 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child's second birthday. These programs can make a tremendous impact on children's ability to learn and later secure employment and provide for their families as adults.

Funding for maternal and child health globally is among the most cost-effective, life-saving investments the U.S. can make. We applaud your leadership and urge you to continue strong support for these programs. It is vital to make robust investments while maintaining other critical humanitarian and development programs that support the well-being of women, newborns, and children to reach our shared goal of ending preventable child and maternal deaths globally. We look forward to working with you to help the United States maintain its leadership in this global effort.

Sincerely,



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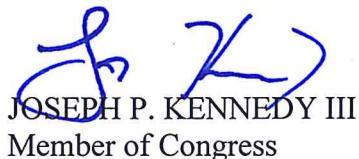
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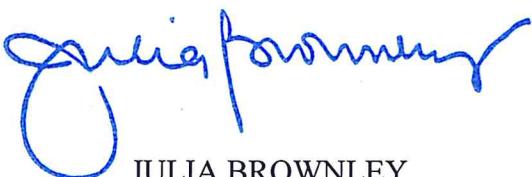
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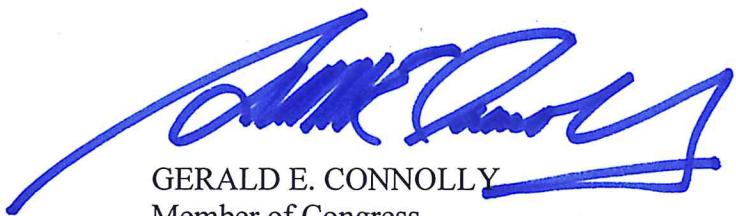
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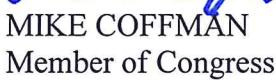
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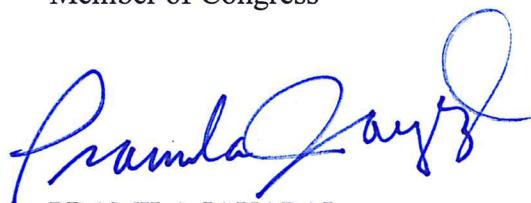
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