United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 9, 2014

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Department of State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Department of State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Graham:

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to improve the health of women and children in the developing world. As you begin to prepare the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2015, we respectfully request that you include robust funding for the Maternal and Children Health and Nutrition programs.

U.S. leadership and funding to improve the survival and health of mothers and children has delivered unprecedented success worldwide, with the annual number of under-five deaths falling from 12.6 million in 1990 to 6.6 million in 2012. Additionally, in the 24 countries where U.S. involvement has been the greatest, maternal mortality has declined an average of five percent each year—faster than the global average.

While great strides have been made, it is clear much work remains to be done. Every day, approximately 800 women—almost entirely from developing countries—die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. In addition, 18,000 newborns and children under five die each day of preventable and treatable diseases such as prematurity, pneumonia and diarrhea, with malnutrition as the underlying cause in 45 percent of those child deaths.

Our nation's Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition programs allow for the delivery of low-cost, life-saving services for newborns, children, and mothers throughout the developing world. These programs support critical initiatives that impact millions by providing access to skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care, training community health workers to treat and prevent deadly illnesses, procuring life-saving health commodities such as vaccines or basic antibiotics to treat pneumonia, and investing in the research and development of new lifesaving tools. U.S. funding also supports the Global Alliance for Vaccines Initiative (GAVI) and child nutrition programs. These proven and effective programs have a tremendous impact on a child's ability to succeed in the future.

We understand the need to balance limited resources in this difficult fiscal climate, but we strongly believe it is vital to invest in maternal and child health and child nutrition while maintaining other critical humanitarian and development programs that support the well-being of women, newborns and children.

Funding for maternal and child health and child nutrition is among the most cost-effective, life-saving investments the U.S. can make. We applaud your longstanding leadership on this issue and urge you to continue your strong support for these programs in the Fiscal Year 2015 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your attention to this important request.

Sincerely,

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Tim Johnson
United States Senator

Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

Carl Levin
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Christopher A. Coons
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Al Franken
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Cory A. Booker
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