



PREEMIE Act Will Save Lives

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AMCHP Calls on Congress to Pass this Important Legislation

Almost half-a-million babies born in the United States are premature; that's a shocking 12 percent of all newborns. Preterm births are twice as high among African-American women. Over 300,000 newborns have a low birth weight.¹ One-quarter of the smallest babies, those with a very low birth weight, will die before their first birthday. Those who survive face the possibility of long-term disability and impaired development.²

The PREEMIE Act takes the first steps to address this national health issue. The Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) supports this important legislation, introduced by Senators Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) and Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Representatives Fred Upton (R-Mich.) and Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.). We are pleased to join our partners, including the March of Dimes, in support of the PREEMIE Act.

In particular, AMCHP strongly supports the bill's proposal to the Department of Health and Human Services to use the Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant—administered by our members—to measure some of the known causes of prematurity, such as the number of women who smoke during pregnancy. We also support expanding federal research on preterm delivery, treatment, and the health of preterm and low birth weight infants.

AMCHP represents state public health leaders in maternal and child health. Together, these professionals serve 27 million women, children

and families across the country, including over two million pregnant women and almost four million infants. As those responsible for ensuring the health of women and children in their states, our members play a pivotal role increasing prenatal care for pregnant women and their families. Thanks to their efforts, the infant mortality rate has decreased by 32 percent since 1990. That means three more babies are alive out of every 1,000 born today.

However there are still real challenges to save the lives of America's newborns. The number of babies with a low birth weight has increased 7.8 percent since 1980, despite the fact that it had been declining.

The PREEMIE bill would improve the treatment and health of premature babies and create programs to support the emotional and informational needs of their families. By reducing the number of babies who are born below normal birth weight, the legislation will help reduce healthcare costs for states, Medicaid and private doctors. More importantly, the bill will help ensure that all American families are healthier and happier.

The Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs represents state public health leaders and others working to improve the health and well-being of women, children, youth and families, including those with special health care needs.

¹ March of Dimes

² Child Trends Databank, www.childtrends.databank.org/indicators/57LowBirthweight.cfm