

November 10, 2011

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Michael Bennet
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Alexander and Bennet:

The undersigned organizations committed to the health and wellbeing of mothers, infants, children and families endorse S. 1440, *the PREEMIE Reauthorization Act*, a bill to reauthorize Public Law 109-450, the PREEMIE Act.

Our nation's premature birth rate peaked at 12.8% in 2006, the year in which the PREEMIE Act was first passed. Since passage, however, premature birth rates have seen small but important declines in each subsequent year. The *PREEMIE Reauthorization Act* represents renewed federal support for our nation's efforts to reduce premature birth and builds upon the success of the original legislation. If enacted, the *PREEMIE Reauthorization Act* would capitalize on this momentum by enhancing federal research, ensuring greater federal collaboration, and promoting education and awareness of premature birth.

Premature birth is one of the most common, serious, and costly challenges facing our nation's health care system. Each year, nearly half a million babies are born too soon and struggle to survive. Many of those who do survive face a lifetime of serious health problems, including cerebral palsy, mental impairments, chronic lung disease, and vision and hearing loss. These health issues represent not only a tremendous challenge for the children affected, but also place a financial and emotional burden on many families. According to a 2006 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, the annual societal cost associated with preterm birth is \$26.2 billion, or \$51,600 per infant born preterm.

The PREEMIE Reauthorization Act will continue our progress toward ensuring that all pregnancies are healthy and full term, and all infants as healthy as possible. We look forward to passage of this important reauthorization bill.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association on Health and Disability
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Nurses Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
CityMatCH

Council of Women's and Infants' Specialty Hospitals
First Candle
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition
March of Dimes
National Association of Children's Hospitals
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Healthy Start Association
Preeclampsia Foundation
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine