

**Office of the President**

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August 30, 2005

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), representing 49,000 physicians and partners in women's health, I urge you to adopt several provisions that would improve the health of women and families across the nation, as you consider the FY06 Labor Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

We believe that women should be able to plan their pregnancies, appropriately spacing births according to their family goals. Currently one half of all pregnancies, approximately 3 million, are unintended, with 1.3 million ending in abortion. Unintended pregnancies can also pose unnecessary health risks to women. Ensuring access to family planning, funding women's health research and outreach, and providing medically accurate, comprehensive sexuality education could help reduce these alarming rates and improve the quality of women's health care.

Continue Support for the National Fetal Infant Mortality Review

The House bill contains report language, which would ensure funding for the National Fetal Infant Mortality Review. ACOG has had a cooperative partnership with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) since 1990 to manage this program, resulting in improved communication between local health systems that work to decrease the infant mortality rate.

Fund the Provider's Partnerships Program

The House bill also encourages the HRSA to continue funding the longstanding Provider's Partnership program. Program funding of \$500,000 would allow these partnerships to coordinate care between local health providers and public agencies to address important issues in women's health such as postpartum depression or smoking cessation during pregnancy.

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Increase Funding of Comprehensive Sexuality Education

The Senate bill would increase abstinence only. ACOG believes in comprehensive sexuality education that includes education on abstinence and contraceptives, and requests no further increase in abstinence only education funds.

Review and Update the 4parents.gov Website with Medically Accurate Information

The Senate bill includes language that would require the Department of Health and Human Services to review the 4parents.gov website. In April, ACOG called on the Department to change medically inaccurate information on the site regarding STDs, contraception and pregnancy.

Require Doctors with Moral Objections to Refer for Abortions

The Senate bill would also alter the current Abortion Non-Discrimination Act language so that it would only apply to the counseling and provision of abortion services, and not referrals. Doctors who morally object to abortion should be required to refer patients to other physicians who will provide the appropriate care.

Fund Detection and Treatment Programs for Perinatal Depression

Lastly, the Senate bill contains language that would increase support for mental health needs, especially perinatal depression (occurring during pregnancy or postpartum). ACOG strongly supports more research funding and funding of programs to improve detection and treatment of a condition that affects as many as 1 in 10 pregnant women in the US.

We hope that you will keep these important provisions in the final appropriations bill. Should you have any questions, please contact Krysta Jones, ACOG Government Relations staff at 202-314-2322.

Sincerely,



Michael T. Menuti, MD, FACOG
President

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