

November 11, 2013

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Waxman,

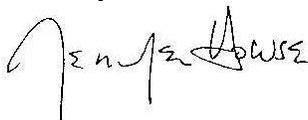
On behalf of the March of Dimes, a unique collaboration of scientists, clinicians, parents, members of the business community, and other volunteers affiliated with 51 chapters representing every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, I would like to express our support for S. 252, a legislative package which includes the PREEMIE Reauthorization Act. We strongly urge swift passage of this legislation in both the House and Senate.

November marks Prematurity Awareness Month, and just days ago the March of Dimes announced that the United States' preterm birth rate had dropped for the sixth consecutive year. In 2012, 11.5 percent of U.S. births were preterm, compared to 12.8 percent in 2006. The March of Dimes estimates that since 2006, about 176,000 fewer babies have been born too soon because of improvement in the preterm birth rate, resulting in healthier infants and potentially saving about \$9 billion in health and societal costs. We believe one of the key factors for the decline is the 2006 PREEMIE Act (P.L. 109-450), which brought the first-ever national focus to prematurity prevention. The law spurred innovative research at the National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and supported evidence-based interventions to prevent preterm birth.

The PREEMIE Reauthorization Act will continue to fuel our progress by supporting federal research and promoting known interventions and community initiatives to prevent preterm birth. Preterm birth exacts a human, emotional, and financial impact on families and a tremendous economic burden on our nation. It is the leading cause of newborn mortality and the second leading cause of infant mortality. Those babies who survive are more likely to suffer from intellectual and physical disabilities. A 2006 report by the Institute of Medicine found the cost associated with preterm birth in the United States was \$26.2 billion annually, or \$51,600 per infant born preterm. Employers, private insurers and individuals bear approximately half of the costs of health care for these infants, and another 40 percent is paid by Medicaid.

Every baby deserves a healthy start in life, and to make this goal a reality we must continue to invest in the prevention of preterm birth. Passage of S. 252 is an important step toward improving the health and wellbeing of our nation's children. We look forward to working with you to secure enactment of this vital legislation.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer L. Howse
President

cc: Majority Leader Eric Cantor
Representative Anna Eshoo
Representative Leonard Lance