

April 3, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Casey
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steve Stivers
1022 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Katherine Clark
1721 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators McConnell and Casey and Representatives Clark and Stivers:

On behalf of the 16 undersigned organizations committed to the health of women and children, we write to thank you for introducing the Protecting our Infants Act of 2015 (S. 799/H.R. 1462). This legislation would direct the Department of Health and Human Services to identify and make available best practices for the diagnosis and treatment of Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), evaluate and coordinate federal efforts to research and respond to NAS, and assist state health agencies with their data collection efforts.

NAS is a syndrome occurring in newborns that are exposed to substances, typically opioids, while in their mother's womb. In utero exposure to these substances can cause the newborn to experience painful withdrawal symptoms, similar to that of an adult, after birth. Between 2000 and 2009, the number of babies diagnosed with NAS tripled.

Costs associated with NAS have increased from an estimated \$190 million per year to \$720 million per year. A 2012 report published in *the Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) stated that the average hospital charges for newborns diagnosed with NAS in 2009 were \$53,400, compared to \$9,500 for all other hospital births. It also found that Medicaid was the primary payer for over 75% of charges. Non-medical costs related to NAS, including those associated with the child welfare and court systems, are also significant.

Despite the increasing rates of NAS and its associated costs, there is no standardized diagnosis and treatment for these newborns. Your legislation is an important first step in better understanding how to best care for these infants. We applaud your leadership and stand ready to work with you to achieve passage of the Protecting our Infants Act of 2015. If you wish to draw upon our assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Kerri Wade at: kwade@awhonn.org.

Sincerely,

American Assembly for Men in Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association
American Society of Peri Anesthesia Nurses
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of Public Health Nurses
Association of Women's Health Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service
International Society of Psychiatric Mental-Health Nurses

National Association for Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
National Nursing Centers Consortium
Organization for Associate Degree Nursing
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates