

November 23, 2009

The Honorable Thomas Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Sub-Committee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin,

We are writing to express our sincere thanks for your leadership in recommending an appropriation for the Office of Adolescent Health and for report language that would place it, as originally authorized, within the HHS Assistant Secretary's Office of Public Health and Science. As organizations concerned about the health of adolescents, we deeply appreciate your recognition of the unique health needs of this age group and the importance of focusing and coordinating federal policies and programs to address those needs.

Although adolescents, particularly low-income adolescents, often have significant and interrelated behavioral, emotional, physical, and sexual health problems, there has not been sufficient concerted action within HHS to address these needs. There are many clinical and community-based efforts in place, but these have tended to focus on single problems or conditions, failing to take advantage of more efficient, coordinated intervention strategies.

We very much appreciate your leadership in elevating this office within HHS so that it will be able to coordinate activities among HRSA, CMS, CDC, OPA, and SAMHSA and undertake demonstrations to improve the health of adolescents, and, in so doing, to reduce health risk exposure and behaviors and better manage and treat their health conditions. Further, we support tasking OAH with implementing a new program on evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention and coordinating with SAMHSA around the implementation of evidence-based prevention and promotion programs as important first initiatives.

Thank you again for your leadership. The appropriation and report language you have recommended is a critical step in improving adolescent health outcomes. We look forward to working with you to advance the health of America's adolescents.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American College of Preventive Medicine
American College Health Association
First Focus
National Association of County and City Health Officials
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
Trust for America's Health
Voices for America's Children