United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education & Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20210

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education & Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY2024) Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill, **we urge you to provide $100 million for the Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies (SET-NET)** at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This funding would enable SET-NET to scale nationally and serve as the nationwide preparedness and response network the United States needs to protect pregnant individuals and infants from emerging and re-emerging public health threats.

The United States continues to grapple with ongoing public health emergencies that put our most vulnerable populations, including pregnant individuals and infants, at risk. SET-NET is an innovative data collection system that links maternal exposures during pregnancy to health outcomes for babies. Building on a mom-baby linked data collection approach developed in response to the Zika outbreak, SET-NET leverages existing data sources to enable CDC and health departments to detect the impact of new and emerging health threats on pregnant individuals and their babies. Findings from SET-NET help families, health care providers, public health professionals, and policymakers take action to save lives, reduce risk, and improve the health of pregnant individuals and infants.
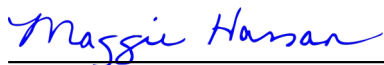
In Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), SET-NET provided support to 29 state, local, and territorial health departments to monitor the impact on pregnant individuals and their babies of exposure to Zika, syphilis, hepatitis C, COVID-19, and congenital cytomegalovirus. With sufficient funding, SET-NET could expand to support 64 state, local, and territorial health departments as they collect, analyze, and report data on existing and emerging threats to pregnant individuals and their babies and broaden the scope of SET-NET to conduct stillbirth research and examine environmental hazards such as lead or perfluouroalkyl substances (PFAS).

The public health data infrastructure and surveillance systems established under this program have contributed data critical to public health responses to new and emerging threats, including:

- Published findings of SET-NET data in 2021 identified that pregnancy increased risk for severe COVID-19 and that a COVID-19 infection during pregnancy increased risk for preterm birth and stillbirth, underscoring the need for infection prevention and supporting a recommendation of vaccination during pregnancy;
- SET-NET data collected between 2018 and 2021 found a link between substance use during pregnancy and infants born with congenital syphilis, highlighting the need for syphilis screening and treatment at every health encounter during pregnancy for those using substances; and
- An analysis of SET-NET indicated missed opportunities to treat pregnant individuals with a hepatitis C virus infection prior to pregnancy, preventing transmission to the infant.

Investing in this sustainable framework for rapid, evidence-based data collection will ensure that the United States is prepared to meet the unique needs of pregnant individuals and infants during public health emergencies. Thank you for your consideration of this **request to provide $100 million for the Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies program in Fiscal Year 2024** to fully fund a national preparedness and response network focused on pregnant individuals and infants.

Sincerely,

Margaret Wood Hassan
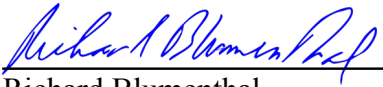United States Senator

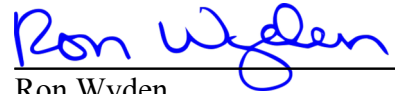Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator
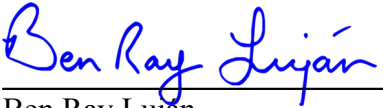
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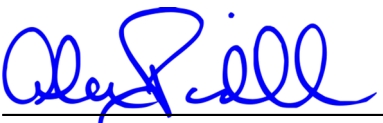Jeanne Shaheen
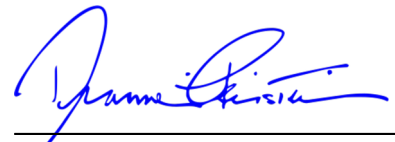United States Senator

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