

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 8, 2004

The Honorable Ralph Regula, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, and Education
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Obey, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, and Education
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

As you begin negotiations with the Senate on FY 2005 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations, we want to urge inclusion of \$840,000 for the purpose of preventing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). We believe that FASD prevention and treatment is essential and should be considered among the funds included for Community Health Centers in FY 2005.

Each year, 40,000 children are born with FASD, amounting to approximately 1% of all United States births. FASD remains the leading known cause of mental retardation and birth defects. This public health crisis is completely preventable through proper education and outreach. Unfortunately, at the current time, there are no community-based programs to prevent, identify and treat this disorder across the board.

Community, Migrant and Homeless Health Centers are not-for-profit providers of health care to America's poor and medically underserved. Health centers serve the working poor and the uninsured, as well as high-risk and vulnerable populations. Studies have shown that these populations are at a higher risk for having children with FASD, given a higher incidence of drug and alcohol abuse and limited access to basic public health education. Community health centers are often the only available source of prenatal care for mothers in this category. These centers serve over 14 million people in over 4,600 health center delivery sites, spanning urban and rural communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and all territories. Such facilities are the most efficient and targeted way of preventing FASD, which costs an average of \$860,000 per afflicted individual and \$5.4 billion for the United States in 2003 alone.

On September 16, the Senate Appropriations Committee included sufficient funds for a program in collaboration with a national voluntary organization that incorporates sustainable systems in community health center delivery sites around the nation focusing on the prevention, identification and support of individuals with FASD. This language was not included in the House report of the Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations bill, and we urge you to support the Senate's lead in conference. The proposed funding would be used to coordinate a program to incorporate sustainable systems in community health centers for the prevention, identification and support of those with FASD.

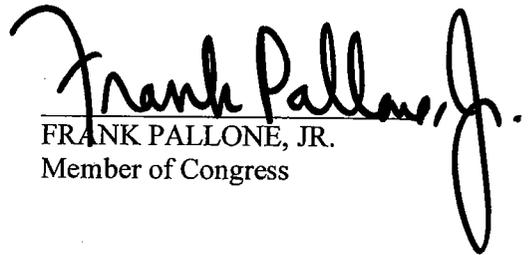
This valuable initiative is the most effective way to divert the cost of prenatal alcohol exposure to society, both in terms of the harm to individuals affected and financial obligations of government through our medical, educational, and judicial systems.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to working with the Subcommittee as the appropriations process continues to move forward.



JIM RAMSTAD
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress