

Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality (ACIM)

5600 Fishers Lane

Room 18N84

Rockville, Maryland 20857

<https://www.hrsa.gov/advisory-committees/Infant-Mortality/index.html>

May 6, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

The Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality (ACIM) has advised the Secretary of Health and Human Services on approaches to reducing maternal and infant mortality in the United States since 1991. In fact, many of the elements of the American Rescue Plan reflect the recommendations that ACIM has made over the years. As current members of ACIM, we congratulate you on your appointment and confirmation to the position of Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services – a position that has major influence on the short-term and long-term health and well-being of mothers and infants in our country. We are also writing to let you know that we will continue to work diligently to develop and present to you evidence-based recommendations to effectively protect and improve the health of all mothers and babies, which is a bellwether of overall community health.

The current membership of ACIM has explicitly centered its work on health equity, with a specific focus on the direct and indirect impacts of racism on maternal and infant health. We have taken this focus because the data overwhelmingly manifest the stark, unacceptable racial disparities in infant and maternal health that persist in this country and we recognize that combating racism is essential for improving our nation's health. We are pleased that the Biden Administration has embraced a similar focus on racial equity which complements our efforts to bring an evidence-based public health framework to health and racial equity concerns. You will find ACIM to be an engaged partner in those efforts.

Among the recommendations for reducing infant and maternal mortality and dismantling systemic racism forthcoming from ACIM will be proposals related to workforce improvements, equitable models of healthcare, improved access to healthcare, and expanded and enhanced data collection protocols to inform policies and programs. In addition to healthcare-related factors, ACIM is poised to make recommendations related to the impact of housing, education, transportation, food and nutrition, environmental factors (including climate change),

immigration, and economic policies on mothers and infants. Also, many of our June 2020 recommendations related to the impact of COVID-19 on mothers and babies, are still relevant today.

While ACIM's mission and attention remain focused on America's mothers and infants, we believe that our collective efforts to address systemic racism and other barriers to good health for mothers and infants will be of benefit to you in your efforts to improve the health of *everyone* in our society. ACIM is ready to help you and your department and other federal agencies achieve that goal. Our nation's mothers, babies, and families deserve no less than our fullest attention to their needs, from generation to generation.

Sincerely,

/s/

Edward P. Ehlinger, M.D., M.S.P.H.
Acting Chair, ACIM