



July 16, 2020

Edward P. Ehlinger, MD, MSPH
Acting Chair, Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality
5600 Fishers Lane, Room 18-25
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Dr. Ehlinger:

Secretary Azar has asked me to thank you for your letter that provided the Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality's (ACIM's) recommendations to address the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency on prenatal, labor and delivery, and newborn care.

ACIM's recommendations were crafted to provide support and guidance to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on preventing further increases in maternal and infant mortality and morbidity during this extraordinary time. HHS is aware of the impacts the COVID-19 public health emergency has, and will continue to have, on families and our healthcare system. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and our federal partners remain committed to ensuring that standards of care for women and infants are not jeopardized during this public health emergency.

We, too, are concerned that the public health emergency could exacerbate our maternal mortality crisis and adversely affect infant mortality. Many of the recommendations have already been used in work that is being done by the Department. Specific to the work of ACIM, the mission of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) is to improve the health and well-being of America's mothers, children, and families. Programs funded by MCHB, including Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant programs and other formula and discretionary grant programs, have an important role to play in delivering critical services and assisting local communities to meet the unique needs of maternal and child health populations. MCHB has worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop helpful, timely, and topic-specific resources for mothers and babies. In addition, MCHB has provided an array of resource materials and trainings to our grantees to deliver remote support to pregnant, breastfeeding women and children. MCHB and CDC also remain committed to ensuring continued promotion and delivery of pediatric immunizations.

HHS has also worked to support continuity of services provided by its grantees, as well as to provide additional flexibilities in their use of funds. HRSA has extended this support and flexibility to expand access to remote services and telehealth and to extend funding deadlines.

I am grateful for the work of ACIM and its commitment to addressing a wide range of issues related to infant mortality and maternal mortality and severe morbidity, including your efforts in

responding to COVID-19. HHS continues to work on these efforts and appreciates the thoughtful analysis and attention that ACIM is bringing to these issues.

Thank you for the vital role ACIM plays in helping to keep our families healthy.

Sincerely,

/Thomas J. Engels/

Thomas J. Engels
Administrator