



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

APR 14 2006

James W. Collins, Jr., M.D., M.P.H.
Chairperson
Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality
Children's Memorial Hospital
2300 Children's Plaza, #45
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Dear Dr. Collins:

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality (ACIM) in which the ACIM offers advice regarding its concerns about the current health status of pregnant women and children, flexibility issues in the Medicaid program, and the potential decreases in funding levels for three Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) programs (Medicaid, Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, and Healthy Start) that provide considerable support to this population.

Please be assured that this Administration recognizes the importance of protecting the health of pregnant women and children, and understands the contributions these three programs make to that achievement. HHS will continue to provide essential human services while transforming our health care system to provide higher quality care at a lower cost. Working to achieve our goals for the betterment of our vulnerable populations, in the face of public health emergencies associated with hurricanes Katrina and Rita as well as pandemic influenza preparedness, presents us all with upcoming challenges.

The President and I have set out a hopeful agenda for the upcoming fiscal year, one that strengthens America against potential threats, heeds the call of compassion, follows wise fiscal stewardship, and advances our Nation's health. Our fiscal year 2007 budget takes important strides forward on national priorities, while keeping us on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009.

Thank you again for your continued leadership and the advice of ACIM on these important matters. I have shared this information throughout the Department, and I look forward to hearing from you again soon.

Sincerely,

/S/

Michael O. Leavitt