

Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality (ACIM)

5600 Fishers Lane

Room 18N84

Rockville, Maryland 20857

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

August 4, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Becerra:

Now is a critical time for mothers and babies in our country. Each day we learn more about the impact of COVID-19, housing and food insecurity, incarceration, substance use, environmental toxics, immigration, and other factors on the health mothers and babies. We also are being confronted with growing evidence of how structural racism and discrimination exacerbate these issues and perpetuate the unconscionable health disparities we have in our country.

Over the last two years the Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality (ACIM), the Federal Committee charged to provide recommendations to you regarding the needs of mothers and infants, has been examining clinical, social, and environmental factors contributing to poor birth outcomes in the United States. After reviewing the scientific and practice-based literature and hearing testimony from maternal and child health experts and advocates, healthcare providers, academicians, community-based organizations, and parents, ACIM has developed and unanimously approved a set of strategic policy recommendations on how to protect and improve the health of mothers and babies.

ACIM's data-driven recommendations, which we submit to you today, are grounded in our commitment to health equity and our shared belief that all investment and policy decisions, at every level and sector of government, should consider their impact on mothers, infants, and women. Particular consideration should be given to those who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and those who are at greatest risk because they experience financial insecurity, inadequate insurance coverage, disability, unstable housing or homelessness, environmental hazards, immigrant status, incarceration, and other adverse conditions across their life-course.

Over the next several months the Biden administration will make important decisions that will significantly impact the health of mothers and babies across our nation and beyond (e.g., the recent decision to reinstate U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's presumptive release policy that applied to pregnant detainees). We believe that implementing this set of evidence-

based recommendations will be a major step forward in helping ensure the health and safety of all of America's mothers and babies and their families during these challenging times and in generations to come. ACIM stands ready to help you and your Department make that happen. Our nation's mothers, babies, and families deserve no less than our fullest attention to their needs.

Sincerely,

/s/

Edward P. Ehlinger, MD, MSPH
Acting Chair, ACIM

Attachments:

ACIM Recommendations to HHS Secretary

ACIM Background Context Recommendations to HHS Secretary