

Public Policy Update

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Congress passes appropriations package funding the Department of Health & Human Services for Fiscal Year 2019

Yesterday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed an appropriations package that would keep the federal government running through December 7, 2018. The short-term funding bill came attached to a larger spending package that contains full-year funding for the Pentagon and the Labor, Health & Human Services and Education departments for fiscal year 2019. The U.S. Senate passed the bill earlier this month, and the President has indicated that he will sign.

Notably, the funding package includes language highlighting the significant and sustained outcomes of home visiting programs. The legislation encourages partnerships between Federally Qualified Health Centers and evidence-based home visiting programs stating, *"Enhanced integration between health care providers and community programs helps transform the lives of vulnerable babies born to at-risk, first-time mothers. Research has shown that partnering first-time mothers with registered nurses or other professionals that provide ongoing home visits dramatically improves the health and well-being of these families. The Committee encourages HRSA to expand partnerships between Health Centers and evidence-based home visiting programs in high need areas in order to improve pregnancy, child health and developments, and other health outcomes, all while reducing costs."*

The NFP National Service Office will continue working to advance policies that have the potential to bring NFP to more moms and babies who need it. We will be working to highlight the above language with relevant stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels.

Maternal Child Health Block Grant: The spending package also included **\$678 million** for the Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant Program, which is an increase of \$26 million above FY18 levels. This increase supports two set-asides within the program: \$23,000,000 for **State Maternal Health Innovation Grants** to establish demonstrations to implement evidence-based interventions to address critical gaps in maternity care service delivery and reduce maternal mortality and \$3,000,000 to expand implementation of the **Alliance for Innovation in Maternal Health Initiative's maternal safety bundles** to all U.S. States, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, as well as tribal entities.

Other programs of interest:

- **\$122.5 million** for **Healthy Start**, an increase of \$12 million over FY18 levels as part of the new initiative to reduce maternal mortality. The additional funding will support health professionals who provide direct access to well-woman care and maternity care services to reduce barriers in access to maternity care and help address maternal health disparities among high-risk and underserved women.

- **\$12 million** to support the work of state **Maternal Mortality Review Committees** (MMRCs) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MMRCs are multidisciplinary groups of local experts in maternal, infant, and public health that examine cases of maternal death. Federal support will accelerate progress toward ensuring that every state has a high-functioning MMRC.