

October 29, 2015

The Honorable Evan Jenkins  
United States House of Representatives  
502 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Jenkins,

The March of Dimes, a unique collaboration of scientists, clinicians, parents, members of the business community, and other volunteers affiliated with chapters representing every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, applauds your continuing leadership in efforts to help ensure that as Congress works to address the opioid epidemic currently sweeping the nation, the needs of newborns exposed to these drugs are taken into account.

As you know, neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) refers to cases in which newborns experience drug withdrawal shortly after birth due to drug exposure in utero. Research has confirmed that the use or abuse of opioids during pregnancy is associated with a significantly increased risk of poor birth outcomes such as low birthweight, prematurity, and other adverse consequences. Between 2000 and 2009, the number of mothers found to be using opioids during pregnancy increased from 1.19 to 5.63 per 1,000 U.S. hospital births. The corresponding increase in NAS cases is posing major challenges for neonatal intensive care units across the nation, and for medical professionals working to provide appropriate care to these often extremely sick infants.

Your introduction of legislation to increase care options for newborns suffering from NAS represents a laudable effort to promote innovative approaches to treating this condition. As the use and abuse of opioids has grown, the ability of the health care sector to respond appropriately for all patients has been strained. The March of Dimes appreciates your commitment to creating effective solutions that not only treat infants with NAS appropriately but also promote care for the mother and bonding with her child.

March of Dimes commends your passion and leadership on this issue, and we look forward to working with you to promote the health and well-being of all pregnant women and infants. If we may be of further assistance, please contact James Gelfand at 202-659-1800 or [JGelfand@marchofdimes.org](mailto:JGelfand@marchofdimes.org).

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer L. Howse  
President