

Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee

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June 8, 2004

Michael Leavitt

Administrator

United States Environmental Protection Agency

1200 Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington, D.C. 20460

RE: Full federal funding for the National Children's Study

Dear Administrator Leavitt:

The Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee (CHPAC) discussed the progress of the National Children's Study (NCS) at our meeting May 26 and 27, 2004. The Committee enthusiastically supports the study and appreciates the work done to date by EPA to move the study forward. To that end, CHPAC recommends that you advocate for full funding of the NCS. The NCS is an interagency program led by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and EPA. **An** important purpose of the NCS is to understand the influences of environmental factors on the development and health of American children where they live, learn, and play, by tracking 100,000 children through age 21. Findings from the NCS will inform the EPA's scientific and public health missions and will promote evidence-based decision making. The broad, coordinated approach of the NCS represents a better way for the EPA to efficiently gather information critical to child health protection.

As early as 1999, the CHPAC strongly encouraged EPA and other agencies "to conduct a longitudinal cohort study which would follow a group of children over time, examining them for diet, drinking water, health status, exposures such as environmental and pharmacological, and other relevant factors from pre-conception, through pregnancy, and into childhood and adolescence" (letter to Administrator Browner, May 28, 1999).

June 8, 2004
Michael Leavitt, Administrator

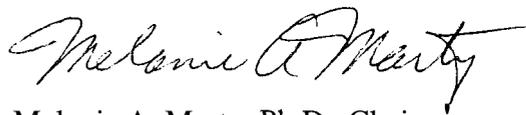
NCS has also received enormous support from many constituencies as evidenced by the letter to President Bush (November 8, 2002) signed by 27 organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Chemistry Council, the Coalition for Children's Health, and the March of Dimes.

There has been a significant investment of time and resources planning for this interagency study. Pilot projects are nearing completion to assure that, when the full study is conducted, the research and data generated are of the highest quality. We applaud the work of EPA in the NCS planning and pilot project phase.

Full federal funding is essential in 2005 to assure that expenditures made to date are not wasted and the project moves from the pilot phase to the full study without losing momentum. Although we recognize that federal funds are limited, several studies show that the economic burden of childhood disease that can be attributed to environmental factors greatly exceeds the costs of the NCS. The role of environmental factors in children's health presents critical opportunities for prevention. The CHPAC encourages you to work with Secretary Thompson and your counterparts in other appropriate federal agencies, and with Congress, to fully fund this important children's health study.

In addition to advocating for full funding for the study, we recommend that you reinvigorate the President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children. This Task Force provides a unique opportunity for leadership and your direct personal involvement would send a strong and important message. Renewed support of the NCS by the Task Force, we believe, would achieve broad-based national support and funding for this important study of factors affecting children's health in America.

Sincerely,



Melanie A. Marty, Ph.D., Chair
Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee

cc: The Honorable Tommy Thompson, Secretary,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Stephen Johnson, Acting Deputy Administrator
Paul Gillman, Assistant Administrator for Research and Development
Tom Gibson, Chief of Staff
William Wood,
Joanne Rodman, Office of Children's Health Protection
Bill Sanders, Acting Director, Office of Children's Health Protection