March 18, 2016

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Department of State,  
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
127 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Department of State,  
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
123 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy:

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to support and protect the health of women and children in the developing world. As you begin work on the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2017, we respectfully request that you include robust funding for Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition programs.

Every day, approximately 800 women, almost entirely from developing countries, will die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. When a mother dies, her children are less likely to go to school, get immunized, and have access to good nutrition. More than 16,000 children under five years old will die each day of preventable and treatable conditions such as prematurity, pneumonia, and diarrhea—with malnutrition being the underlying cause in 45 percent of those deaths.

U.S. leadership in this field is critical and has resulted in real and measurable progress. In 1990, 12.6 million children under the age of five died from preventable causes. In 2014, that number fell to 5.9 million. In the 24 countries where U.S. involvement has been the greatest, maternal mortality has declined an average of five percent each year—more than double the global average. We recognize the need to balance limited resources in this difficult fiscal climate, but we strongly believe it is vital that the United States continue robust investment in Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition programs.

Our nation’s Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition programs allow for the delivery of low-cost, life-saving services for newborns, children, and mothers throughout the developing world. These programs support critical initiatives that affect millions by providing access to skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care, training community health workers, procuring life-saving health commodities, and investing in the research and development of new lifesaving tools.

U.S. funding also supports Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which works to provide new and underutilized vaccines to developing countries, advance global polio eradication efforts, and implement nutrition-specific programs for women and children. These proven and effective programs can make a tremendous impact on a child’s ability to succeed in the future.

Funding for maternal and child health and child nutrition is among the most cost-effective, life-saving investments the U.S. can make. We applaud the leadership you have
demonstrated over the years on this issue and urge you to continue strong support for these programs in the Fiscal Year 2017 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
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Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator
Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Bill Nelson
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator