

Making a Promise to Every Child

Every day new moms around the globe make a promise to their newborns — they vow to protect and nurture them so they can live healthy, fulfilling lives. But no matter how hard some moms try, the resources just aren't there to ensure their babies make it through the critical early years. So each year, 5.9 million children still die of mainly preventable and treatable causes before their fifth birthday — 11 children every minute. But members of Congress from both parties have quietly come together in support of the health of mothers and children worldwide through the Reach Every Mother and Child Act, H.R. 3706 and S. 1911. If Congress persists and passes the Reach Act into law, it will change everything for millions of moms and kids. The goal of the legislation is to end unnecessary maternal and child deaths by 2035.

Creating a More Efficient Approach

Working with its partners in lower-income countries, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has long been at the forefront of reducing child and maternal deaths, helping drive down preventable deaths for kids under age 5 from 12.7 million in 1990 to 5.9 million today.

In 2012, the United States co-hosted the Child Survival Call to Action, which forged a global consensus that we can end preventable child deaths by 2035. However, a 2014 report from the ACES Blue Ribbon Panel, a group of high-level business and development experts, identified a series of specific budget and management challenges impeding faster progress. These include a highly decentralized planning and decision-making process, a lack of flexibility, and fragmented data collection that makes it difficult to measure progress.

Last year, USAID released a report charting its own progress on the “Call to Action,” and outlined plans to accelerate progress. USAID has already implemented a number of the panel's suggested reforms. This includes creating clear benchmarks for success, appointing a coordinator to manage the entire strategy, and realigning funds to save more lives even without spending additional money. This is major progress, but will not be enough to achieve the ultimate goal of ending preventable child and maternal deaths.

What Will the Reach Act Do?

The Reach Act will hold USAID accountable for sticking to its promises. Without requiring additional funding, it will ensure USAID:

- Develops a U.S. Government strategy to help end preventable child and maternal deaths with ambitious, clear, and measurable goals;
- Increases accountability and transparency at all levels;
- Focuses on the poorest and most vulnerable populations, and recognizes the unique needs within different countries and communities;

- Scales up what is proven to work and save the most lives, while reporting against clear targets;
- Codifies a Child and Maternal Survival Coordinator responsible for oversight;
- Creates new, innovative funding sources to complement U.S. investment; and
- Stretches every dollar further to save the most lives.

This legislation will maximize our investments, with returns measured in lives saved and healthier, more prosperous communities. If the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations work quickly to take up this bill, Congress can help make sure that every single child in the world — regardless of where they are born — has a chance to not only survive, but to thrive.

Write to Your Legislator or to Your Paper to Advance the Reach Act

1. Reference a **recent article in the paper**, and write in a way that will appeal to your community. Find a hook. What child- or mother-themed article has run recently?
2. Tell **about the opportunity to secure** a healthy, bright future for every child.
3. Ask your **members of Congress and committee leadership** to act on the Reach Act.
4. Use the “EPIC” format, like the sample below. Remember to keep it short (100-200 words).
5. If you write your paper and get published, amplify your impact by sending your piece to your members of Congress, explaining why this issue matters, and asking them to take action. Share it on social media, mentioning your member of Congress. Share it with fellow advocates and RESULTS staff.

<u>E</u>ngage	When we were born, our moms made a promise to protect and nurture us so that we could reach our full potential.
<u>P</u>roblem	But no matter how hard some moms try, they don't have the resources to ensure that their children get what they need to grow, survive, and thrive. Every minute, 11 children under age 5 die of unnecessary causes around the world. The heartbreak experienced by so many moms is unfair and unimaginable.
<u>I</u>nform about the solution	But Congress has come together around moms and kids through the Reach Every Mother and Child Act (H.R. 3706 and S. 1911). Almost 170 legislators, Republicans and Democrats alike, have signed on to the Reach Act in an effort to improve the effectiveness of our maternal and child health work. The goal is to eventually end unnecessary deaths of moms and kids by 2035.
<u>C</u>all to action!	Now is the time for Representative xxx and Senators xxx and xxx to encourage the leadership of the House Foreign Affairs and Senator Foreign Relations Committees to work on the Reach Act. Will the call to action be made? There is no better way to honor children – and moms – around the world.