

National Child Health Day is an important opportunity to reflect on how to best protect and strengthen children's health in the United States. It focuses on such important factors as prenatal care, adolescent health, the impact of daycare, preventing injuries, good nutrition, and immunization.

This year's goal is to reduce infant mortality. Although the United States boasts one of the world's lowest infant mortality rates for preterm infants born between 24 and 36 weeks, tragically the number of deaths among near full-term infants remains much higher in the United States than in much of the developed world. As a nation we now rank 27th in infant mortality, behind Japan, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Israel, and most of Europe. In 2009, 26,000 infants died before their first birthday. Shamefully, the infant mortality rate for black infants is two times higher than the rate for white infants.

This is why I support the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius' national strategy to reduce infant mortality through reducing elective deliveries, increasing safe sleeping practices, enhancing perinatal regionalization reduction, decreasing smoking among pregnant women, and expanding access to interconception care.

I am also a strong supporter of the Affordable Care Act, which guarantees that children with pre-existing conditions have access to health care coverage, and extends the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). I will continue to work to promote nutrition, quality health care, safe communities, clean air and water, so that our children are given every chance to live long, healthy, and happy lives.