



American Public Health Association

Working for a Healthier World

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**Testimony of the American Public Health Association
Submitted for the Record to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health
Before the Hearing on Global Child Survival
February 14, 2008**

Dr. Georges Benjamin, Executive Director, American Public Health Association, respectfully submits the following testimony for the congressional record on behalf of the American Public Health Association:

Founded in 1872, the American Public Health Association is the oldest, largest, and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world. The association has a long-standing commitment to promoting global health and protecting the health of all citizens of the world from preventable, serious health threats.

APHA strongly supports passage of the U.S. Commitment to Global Child Survival Act (H.R. 2266), which would help improve the health of newborns, children and mothers in developing countries. APHA is a champion of child health, supporting efforts domestically and internationally. We promote actions aimed at improving understanding and awareness of the unmet health needs of children, as well as advocate for effective interventions to improve child health and survival. Our recent advocacy efforts include supporting the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Programs, a primary initiative during the past year to ensure that all children have access to affordable health care.

On a global level, APHA supports our counterparts in developing countries through its participation in the World Federation of Public Health Associations. Our participation with this association highlights the importance we place on having coordinating and accountable systems in place to address this worldwide crisis. Through the Federation, we fight to put more resources into children's health programs, both nationally and internationally.

APHA is committed to increasing the level of U.S. public, private and multi-lateral programs for child and maternal health and survival. Our International Health section boasts more than 1600 members, many of whom actively work on the ground to implement projects and advocate for child survival. U.S. leadership is immensely important worldwide. Doing more for children around the world helps to strengthen the U.S. leadership role in helping developing countries, their families and children. Passage of the U.S. Commitment to Global Child Survival Act will make this possible.

Passage will also help to restore the imbalance in U.S. global health funding which has occurred recently as a result of the massive expansion of funding for HIV/AIDS and malaria programs.

While this expansion of HIV/AIDS and malaria funding is certainly laudable, at the same time, funding for programs to save the lives of mothers and children (only a small proportion of which are caused by HIV/AIDS and malaria) has actually declined in real terms during the past decade. At present, the U.S. is not providing its rightful share of support. By passing this legislation, the U.S. will be back on track for meeting its global responsibility to mothers and children in resource-poor settings. It will also be possible to expand the application of current knowledge and technology in these settings, so that our world will not continue to have almost 10 million children below the age of five dying of readily preventable or treatable conditions and more than 500,000 mothers dying from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. This is a situation which now must be considered morally reprehensible and calls for a stronger response from the American people and our government.

APHA wishes to thank the members of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee for their support of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "B".

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (Emeritus)
Executive Director