

Joint Letter in Support of H.R. 669

June 26, 2013

Honorable Peter King
339 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman King:

We write to thank you for sponsoring H.R. 669, the Sudden Unexpected Death Data Enhancement and Awareness Act, and to express our strong support for it. The bill's original sponsor in the Senate, Frank Lautenberg, who recently passed away, was a champion for child safety throughout his career. Passing this legislation would significantly improve infant safety and would be a fitting tribute to his legacy. We are ready to join you in moving it forward in both chambers.

What we know from the statistics reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") – and especially what we do not know – tells the story of why this legislation is so critical. There are more than 4,500 Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths ("SUIDs") in the United States each year, and half of these deaths are due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome ("SIDS"). While it is suspected that 80 to 90 percent of the remaining deaths may be the result of unsafe sleep practices, we do not know for sure. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends evidence-based safe sleep practices that include emphasizing: placing infants on their backs for sleep; using firm sleep surfaces in cribs with no soft objects or loose bedding; providing a smoke-free environment and room-sharing without bed-sharing. In order to further develop these and other safe sleep guidelines and to continue improving public education efforts around this topic, it is essential to have high-quality data on this important issue.

The CDC is trying its best to bring more consistency to information regarding SUIDs but is limited by diminished resources. We deeply appreciate the need for these data to develop the most practical and effective remedies, as do the CDC and pediatric institutions. This bill provides needed investments that will significantly improve the gathering and assessment of data regarding the circumstances surrounding SUIDs. This information is essential to identifying current risk factors contributing to SUIDs and tailoring public health efforts accordingly.

The public education and awareness role of the bill is also critical, because we know that public education can help reduce SUIDs. In 1994, the Back to Sleep public education campaign was launched by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development ("NICHD"), now known as the Safe to Sleep campaign. This campaign has contributed to a significant decline in SIDS deaths, but there is still an ongoing need for further progress that this bill's public education components would support. Finally, because there is nothing as tragic as parents having to plan a funeral for their baby, the expansion of support services, such as grief counseling, for families who have experienced a stillbirth or SUID loss is equally important.



safekids.org

Once again, we strongly support the passage of H.R. 669 on its merits and as a tribute to the career of the late Senator Frank Lautenberg. We look forward to working with your office to move this legislation forward. Thank you for your continued leadership in protecting our children.

Sincerely,



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June 26, 2013

The Honorable Frank Pallone
237 Cannon House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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