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December 10, 2010

Mr. Christopher Queram, President
Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality
7974 UW Health Court
Middleton, WI 53562

Mr. Queram:

On behalf of the members of the Special Committee on Infant Mortality, I am writing to request help from the WCHQ in our attempts to improve birth outcomes for all populations in Wisconsin and to reduce the unacceptably high rate of deaths of African-American babies in Wisconsin.

As you are probably aware, infant mortality rates for African-American babies in Wisconsin are higher than the rates in many so-called Third World countries. A black woman in Wisconsin faces an increased risk of a poor birth outcome, or loss of her child before the child reaches age 1, regardless of the woman's age, income, or education level. In addition, the committee is concerned about possible negative effects of certain trends in health care provided to pregnant women in Wisconsin, specifically elective preterm inductions of labor and elective preterm caesarean sections.

As was made clear in the excellent presentation made to the committee by Cindy Schlough, your Director of Strategic Partnerships, WCHQ has been uniquely effective in promoting and facilitating improvements in the quality of health care provided to Wisconsin's citizens. Therefore the Special Committee requests that the WCHQ take steps to determine which health care services have the greatest impact on birth outcomes and develop and implement performance measures to assess the quality of those services. We believe that this work will incentivize health care providers to examine and improve their own services and to adopt best practices that are identified as a result of your efforts.

Implementing performance measures that are tied to birth outcomes could be especially productive right now. Several unprecedented initiatives to address the infant mortality epidemic -- the Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families and the Medicaid Healthy Birth Outcomes Medical Home Pilot - provide an excellent opportunity to study different models of health care delivery to pregnant women.

In closing, we hope you will give serious attention to the infant mortality crisis in our state and grant a high priority to activating the impressive resources of the WCHQ to help the most vulnerable of Wisconsin's citizens.

Respectfully,

Senator Judy Robson, Chair
Special Committee on Infant Mortality

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