

February 1, 2017

The Honorable Jim Abeler  
Chair, Senate Human Services Reform Finance and Policy Committee

**Re: Governor's Budget**

Mr. Chair or Madame Chair, my name is Angela Thies. I am the Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs for the March of Dimes in Minnesota. I am here today in support of the provision in the Department of Human Service budget, as proposed by Governor Dayton that would increase access to long acting reversible contraceptives, otherwise known as LARCs.

Founded in 1938, the mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of all women of childbearing age, infants and children by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.

Birth spacing is the period of time from a baby's birth to the beginning of another pregnancy, also known as the interpregnancy interval. Lack of spacing between births is linked to delayed prenatal care and adverse birth outcomes, such as preterm birth, low birthweight, and complications. Infants born preterm are at increased risk for delayed development of social, motor, and cognitive skills and are more likely to experience lifelong health problems such as asthma, hearing or vision loss, and learning disabilities.

Access to services that promote appropriate birth spacing can reduce the risk for poor birth outcomes. For example, long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC) are proven effective at preventing unintended pregnancies, increasing interpregnancy intervals, and improving maternal and child health outcomes. A program in Colorado that provided LARCs at no cost showed significant reductions in teen pregnancy and preterm birth, as well as savings of \$5.85 for every dollar invested.

The March of Dimes supports access to preconception and prenatal care, including birth control counseling, education and services, including increased LARC access to ensure proper birth spacing and reduce rates of preterm birth and other adverse birth outcomes.

On behalf of the March of Dimes, I thank you for your time and would be happy to provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Angela Thies  
Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs