



April 17, 2018

Senator Bill Nelson
Hart Senate Office Building, #716
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Senator Nelson,

It is my pleasure to offer the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONNs) strong support for your proposed legislation "Protecting Newborns from Opioids Act." As the foremost nursing organization representing the interests of 350,000 registered nurses working in women's health, obstetric, and neonatal nursing across the United States, we look forward to partnering with you on this and other initiatives designed to combat the opioid epidemic which is affecting so many vulnerable women and newborns in the United States.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the number of babies born in the United States dependent on opioids has tripled in the last 15 years. Currently, 6 of every 1,000 babies born in the United States are diagnosed with neonatal abstinence syndrome. Babies going through opioid withdrawal require hospitalization for 17 days after delivery, compared with a healthy baby who spends 2 days in the hospital after birth. The cost of hospitalization for each baby withdrawing from opioids is \$66,700 compared to \$3,500 for a healthy newborn. Your proposed bill, which proposes to award grants to States to create or improve surveillance systems for neonatal abstinence syndrome and to conduct research on the prevention, factors surrounding, and health outcomes of the condition, is a forward-thinking and targeted approach to better understand this condition which will inform novel intervention programs for nurses to implement.

We are hopeful that your bill will progress through Congress and we stand ready to assist you as needed with additional support, research or advocacy. Please feel free to have your office reach out to Dr. Jacqueline Rychnovsky, Vice President of Research and Public Policy (jrychnovsky@awhonn.org) or Mr. Seth Chase, Director of Government Affairs (schase@awhonn.org) should you desire additional information on this or other topics affecting women and newborns. We look forward to future collaboration.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Berry, MBA, CAE
Interim Chief Executive Officer