

**AMCHP 2008 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE:**

**What Washington Wants to Hear:**

**Explaining Your Programs to Congress**

March 1st to 5th, 2008

JOSHUA BROWN: Great. Thanks to both of you. So, let's just real quick try to reenact what happened before with Brent and I as we have yet another Hill visit right outside the men's room here. All right.

BRENT EWIG: Hi. Brent Ewig with The Association Of Maternal And Child Health Programs. We represent all the state public MCH programs that work in the state health departments. Peter talked to you today about the Title V Maternal And Child Health Block Grant. And we know your boss has been great on health for kids. We know that she served on the board of the children's hospital in East Bumblebee before she was elected. She voted for the bipartisan (unintelligible) bill, but we really need your help now specifically on getting a boost in funding for the Title V Maternal And Child Health Services Block Grant, and what we're asking for this year is \$850 million.

JOSHUA BROWN: That's a fairly large increase though.

BRENT EWIG: It is, and we know that you're sitting in a tough position and there's a lot of competing priorities. Here's what we think is the issue. The block grant has been flat-

funded or cut over the last five years, and you can see here we have a graph that shows the decline in funding. And the state has really been stretched. It's been serving more people with less money. It's been doing everything it can. But what we're seeing right now is that they stretched the limit, and as you well know, from that article in the East Bumblebee, 'cause that last week, the infant mortality rate hasn't improved in the last six years. The Black infant mortality rate in your district remains double that of Whites, and that should not happen here in the richest country in America. The teen pregnancy rate which we had been declining for 14 years has blipped up for the first time, and the childhood obesity rate that has been raising for the last few decades threatens to overwhelm all the health gains we've made that the block grant has contributed to. Let me just step back to you. Are you familiar with the block grant?

JOSHUA BROWN: I'm not that familiar with it. Of course, my boss used to be a pediatrician. Of course, she has a child herself, but I'd like to know a little more about it.

BRENT EWIG: Well, it was created as part of the Social Security Act, and that's the Title V reference in the Title V of the Social Security Act. And what it essentially is in a very brief overview, it's a federal-state partnership that provides funding to the states to address their issues in maternal and child health. The state does a needs assessment every five years. It has performance measures that show where they're measuring, where they're making a difference. And you could see it in this sheet here, we put together some state-specific information because we know you want, that your most concerned about East Bumblebee, and what you see is this is how much money we

have last year and the decrease. We wanted to give you a few examples of how that money is being used effectively, and there's just three things I'd point out to you. What we run in the district and state-wise, baby, your Baby Campaign, it's a 1-800 number that links moms and expectant moms to services, a referral network of providers that we have throughout the state.

We also run a program for children with special healthcare needs, and you could see there's two clinics statewide. There was regionalized services, one in your district, and that has served, you can see the number of people that they served there. And then also we do a new-born screening program. This is for all babies in the state. Every time a new baby is born, they're screened for any, for rare diseases. When we find those, we link them with the right services. And, as I've said up front, the program has been stretched and we're seeing some alarming MCH statistics now. And now is the time, I think, to reinvest in that federal-state partnership. And that's what we're here to ask you your help on.

JOSHUA BROWN: Great. Well, I was not aware of all this as a matter of fact. This is exactly the kind of issues that I think my boss will get behind. I had to bring up the fact that I'm sure you know we're working on this new kind of (unintelligible) environment. So I have to find the money from somewhere else. Do you have any suggestions for me?

BRENT EWIG: I know that's tough and we know it's going to be a rough year, an election year, and there's a lot of things going on. What we also know is that over the

last few years, the programs that have done a good job in explaining to Congress where those needs are have ended up getting increases in the end, and we expect that that will happen this year. And as I said, what we're seeing with the status of maternal and child health in your district and across the country right now has raised some alarms, and we think now is the time to re-invest in that program to provide some of that federal leadership. And we know it's tough, but that's why my boss is elected to balance those needs and set those priorities. And we know that she's been a champion for moms and kids in the past, and we hope we can count on her support for full funding of \$850 million for the block grant this year.

JOSHUA BROWN: Great. Hey, just between you and I, what do you think of the President's tax cuts?

BRENT EWIG: We know there's a wide variety of viewpoints on that, but, you know. Congress will have certainly a interesting debate, and as an association, we have not taken a position on that. What we do know is that the Maternal And Child Health Block Grant needs some federal leadership prioritization and investment. And again, like I said, that the health statistics that we're seeing in your district and across the nation, we think, argue for an increase in that program.

JOSHUA BROWN: Great. Well, I certainly I'm going to be talking to my boss later this week. This is a program that seems to me right on the surface would be really easy to sell to her. If I have a follow-up information, can I contact you?

BRENT EWIG: Yes. What else can I get you? What (inaudible) questions you have? Is there any...

JOSHUA BROWN: Well, actually she is working on infant mortality in particular and we really don't have any numbers in our district of kind of what the infant mortality rates are particularly between Black rates and White rates.

BRENT EWIG: Yeah, we can get that. We can certainly get that for you. Let me give you my card. I'm going to be back up on the Hill this Friday and I'd love to drop off some additional information both on that issue and what the program in East Bumblebee is doing to address those issues around infant mortality. In fact, if I could bring that back up to you, that'll be great.

JOSHUA BROWN: Fantastic. Thanks. Brent, I'm going to ask you to actually stay up here a moment if you could.