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United Against Infant Mortality

Brief Talking Points

The U.S. infant mortality rate is the worst in the developed world, behind Cuba. The Centers for Disease Control notes that there are five main causes. The causes are varied, but the solutions overlap. These are those causes, and some public health interventions we can take to address them.

Birth defects cause more than 20% of infant deaths in America. To fight this, we can:

- Promote and fund prenatal screening for diseases that should be treated early.
- Promote and fund the use of prenatal vitamins by new moms.
- Immunize women of child bearing age against measles (Rubella).

Pre-term delivery and low birth weight cause 18% of infant deaths here. We can lower this with:

- Expanded smoking cessation programs.
- Changing the pay incentives for elective pre-term deliveries.
- Encourage community support of breastfeeding by educating professionals, new moms, employers, and the general public.
- Supporting new mothers after birth with home visits by trained professionals called *doulas*.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) claims the lives of 6.7% of U.S. infants and fatal injuries cause another 4.9%.

- Promoting breastfeeding addresses SIDS as well as low birth weight babies too! (See above)
- Funding 'Safe Sleep' campaigns to raise awareness and educate new parents.

Maternal complications like pre-eclampsia and diabetes cause 6% of U.S infant mortality. We can address this with initiatives that:

- Support at-risk mothers before and after birth with home visits by trained professionals called *doulas*.

Maternity care is becoming more inaccessible in poor rural areas. We can alleviate this by:

- Funding homes close to medical care where rural pregnant women can live for a week or two before their due dates.
- Pay for travel of high-risk moms to keep prenatal check-ups with specialists in medical 'hubs'.
- Funding emergency birth training at rural clinics and hospitals.