106TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION  

S. 1384

To amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for a national folic acid education program to prevent birth defects, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES  

JULY 16, 1999  

Mr. ABRAHAM (for himself, Mr. BOND and Mr. KOHL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for a national folic acid education program to prevent birth defects, and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
3
4 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
5 This Act may be cited as the “Folic Acid Promotion and Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1999”.
6 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.
7 The Congress finds as follows:
(1) Each year an estimated 2,500 infants are born in the United States with serious birth defects of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects.

(2) The most common neural tube defects are spina bifida and anencephaly.

(3) Spina bifida, the incomplete closure of the spinal column, is a leading cause of childhood paralysis.

(4) Anencephaly is a fatal condition in which an infant is born with a severely underdeveloped brain and skull.

(5) As many as 70 percent of neural tube birth defects could be prevented if all women of childbearing age consumed 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, beginning before pregnancy.

(6) Folic acid is a B vitamin found naturally in foods such as leafy green vegetables, beans, citrus fruits, and juices.

(7) Since January 1, 1998, the Food and Drug Administration has required that all foods containing enriched flour, such as breads, pasta and breakfast cereal, be fortified with folic acid.

(8) In addition to consuming a diet high in folate rich foods, a daily multivitamin is one of the most reliable sources of folic acid.
(9) A majority of women are not aware of this prevention opportunity, nor are they consuming the recommended daily amount.

(10) A national folic acid education campaign is needed to urge women to take this simple step to prevent neural tube defects.

SEC. 3. PROGRAM REGARDING EFFECTS OF FOLIC ACID IN PREVENTION OF BIRTH DEFECTS.

Part B of title III of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 243 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 317G the following section:

“EFFECTS OF FOLIC ACID IN PREVENTION OF BIRTH

DEFECTS

“Sec. 317H. (a) In General.—The Secretary, acting through the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shall carry out a program (directly or through grants or contracts) for the following purposes:

“(1) To provide education and training for health professionals and the general public for purposes of explaining the effects of folic acid in preventing birth defects and for purposes of encouraging each woman of reproductive capacity (whether or not planning a pregnancy) to consume on a daily basis a dietary supplement that provides an appropriate level of folic acid.
“(2) To conduct research with respect to such education and training, including identifying effective strategies for increasing the rate of consumption of folic acid by women of reproductive capacity.

“(3) To conduct research to increase the understanding of the effects of folic acid in preventing birth defects, including understanding with respect to cleft lip, cleft palate, and heart defects.

“(4) To provide for appropriate epidemiological activities regarding folic acid and birth defects, including epidemiological activities regarding neural tube defects.

“(b) Consultations with States and Private Entities.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall consult with the States and with other appropriate public or private entities, including national nonprofit private organizations, health professionals, and providers of health insurance and health plans.

“(c) Technical Assistance.—The Secretary may (directly or through grants or contracts) provide technical assistance to public and nonprofit private entities in carrying out the activities described in subsection (a).

“(d) Evaluations.—The Secretary shall (directly or through grants or contracts) provide for the evaluation of activities under subsection (a) in order to determine the
extent to which such activities have been effective in carry-
ning out the purposes of the program under such sub-
section, including the effects on various demographic pop-
ulations. Methods of evaluation under the preceding sen-
tence may include surveys of knowledge and attitudes on
the consumption of folic acid and on blood folate levels.
Such methods may include complete and timely moni-
toring of infants who are born with neural tube defects.

“(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—For the
purpose of carrying out this section, there are authorized
to be appropriated $20,000,000 for fiscal year 2000, and
such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years
2001 through 2004.”.