

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 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Folic Acid Promotion
5 and Birth Defects Prevention Act of 1999”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds as follows:

1 (1) Each year an estimated 2,500 infants are
2 born in the United States with serious birth defects
3 of the brain and spine, called neural tube defects.

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

6 (3) Spina bifida, the incomplete closure of the
7 spinal column, is a leading cause of childhood paral-
8 ysis.

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

12 (5) As many as 70 percent of neural tube birth
13 defects could be prevented if all women of child-
14 bearing age consumed 400 micrograms of folic acid
15 daily, beginning before pregnancy.

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

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

23 (8) In addition to consuming a diet high in
24 folate rich foods, a daily multivitamin is one of the
25 most reliable sources of folic acid.

1 (9) A majority of women are not aware of this
 2 prevention opportunity, nor are they consuming the
 3 recommended daily amount.

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

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

9 Part B of title III of the Public Health Service Act
 10 (42 U.S.C. 243 et seq.) is amended by inserting after sec-
 11 tion 317G the following section:

12 “EFFECTS OF FOLIC ACID IN PREVENTION OF BIRTH
 13 DEFECTS

14 “SEC. 317H. (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, act-
 15 ing through the Director of the Centers for Disease Con-
 16 trol and Prevention, shall carry out a program (directly
 17 or through grants or contracts) for the following purposes:

18 “(1) To provide education and training for
 19 health professionals and the general public for pur-
 20 poses of explaining the effects of folic acid in pre-
 21 venting birth defects and for purposes of encour-
 22 aging each woman of reproductive capacity (whether
 23 or not planning a pregnancy) to consume on a daily
 24 basis a dietary supplement that provides an appro-
 25 priate level of folic acid.

1 “(2) To conduct research with respect to such
2 education and training, including identifying effective
3 strategies for increasing the rate of consumption
4 of folic acid by women of reproductive capacity.

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

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

13 “(b) CONSULTATIONS WITH STATES AND PRIVATE
14 ENTITIES.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary
15 shall consult with the States and with other appropriate
16 public or private entities, including national nonprofit private
17 organizations, health professionals, and providers of
18 health insurance and health plans.

19 “(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary may
20 (directly or through grants or contracts) provide technical
21 assistance to public and nonprofit private entities in carrying
22 out the activities described in subsection (a).

23 “(d) EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary shall (directly or
24 through grants or contracts) provide for the evaluation of
25 activities under subsection (a) in order to determine the

1 extent to which such activities have been effective in car-
2 rying out the purposes of the program under such sub-
3 section, including the effects on various demographic pop-
4 ulations. Methods of evaluation under the preceding sen-
5 tence may include surveys of knowledge and attitudes on
6 the consumption of folic acid and on blood folate levels.
7 Such methods may include complete and timely moni-
8 toring of infants who are born with neural tube defects.
9 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—For the
10 purpose of carrying out this section, there are authorized
11 to be appropriated \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2000, and
12 such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years
13 2001 through 2004.”.

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