

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2538

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 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 15, 1999

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD (for herself, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. BARCIA, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. BENTSEN, Ms. BERKLEY, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. BONILLA, Mr. BONIOR, Mr. BOSWELL, Ms. BROWN of Florida, Mrs. CAPPS, Ms. CARSON, Mrs. CLAYTON, Mr. COX, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. CUNNINGHAM, Ms. DANNER, Mr. DEFazio, Ms. DEGETTE, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. DICKEY, Mr. DICKS, Mr. DIXON, Mr. DOOLEY of California, Mr. EDWARDS, Mr. EVANS, Mr. FARR of California, Mr. FORBES, Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, Mr. FROST, Mr. GONZALEZ, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. HINOJOSA, Ms. NORTON, Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Ms. KAPTUR, Mrs. KELLY, Mr. KILDEE, Ms. KILPATRICK, Mr. KINGSTON, Mr. KNOLLENBERG, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut, Mr. MATSUI, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. MCKINNEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mrs. MINK of Hawaii, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mrs. MORELLA, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts, Mr. NETHERCUTT, Mrs. NORTHUP, Mr. ORTIZ, Mr. PACKARD, Mr. PASTOR, Mr. PAYNE, Ms. PELOSI, Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. REYES, Ms. RIVERS, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ, Mr. RUSH, Ms. SANCHEZ, Mr. SANDLIN, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. SHOWS, Mr. SKELTON, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. STARK, Mr. STUPAK, Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mrs. THURMAN, Mr. TOWNS, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. WALSH, Ms. WATERS, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. WICKER, Mr. WISE, and Ms. WOOLSEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Commerce

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:

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

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

13 (3) Spina bifida, the incomplete closure of the
14 spinal column, is a leading cause of childhood paral-
15 ysis.

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

19 (5) As many as 70 percent of neural tube birth
20 defects could be prevented if all women of child-

1 bearing age consumed 400 micrograms of folic acid
2 daily, beginning before pregnancy.

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

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

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

13 (9) A majority of women are not aware of this
14 prevention opportunity, nor are they consuming the
15 recommended daily amount.

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

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

21 Part B of title III of the Public Health Service Act
22 (42 U.S.C. 243 et seq.) is amended by inserting after sec-
23 tion 317G the following section:

1 including epidemiological activities regarding neural
2 tube defects.

3 “(b) CONSULTATIONS WITH STATES AND PRIVATE
4 ENTITIES.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary
5 shall consult with the States and with other appropriate
6 public or private entities, including national nonprofit pri-
7 vate organizations, health professionals, and providers of
8 health insurance and health plans.

9 “(c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary may
10 (directly or through grants or contracts) provide technical
11 assistance to public and nonprofit private entities in car-
12 rying out the activities described in subsection (a).

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

24 “(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—For the
25 purpose of carrying out this section, there are authorized

1 to be appropriated \$20,000,000 for fiscal year 2000, and
2 such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years
3 2001 through 2004.”.

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