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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **U.S. Senate Takes Major Step for Children in Poor Countries**

Arlington, VA - Today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted S. 1418, the Global Child Survival Act, out of committee. It will now be sent to the floor for final consideration. This vote shows the resolve of both Democrats and Republicans to demonstrate leadership in saving the lives of the world's most vulnerable citizens - its children.

Despite recent progress, nearly 27,000 children under five die each day - about 10 million every year - from diseases and conditions that we rarely face any longer in the U.S. Forty percent of child deaths occur among newborns, most from severe infections, birth asphyxia (difficulty breathing), or complications due to preterm birth. One in five child deaths - 2 million annually - are due to pneumonia, while diarrheal diseases account for nearly another 2 million. Measles, malaria, and HIV/AIDS together comprise 15 percent of child deaths. Malnutrition is an underlying factor in more than half of all of these deaths.

After today's committee vote, Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), one of the original cosponsors of the Global Child Survival Act, explained: "This investment is necessary if we are to follow through on the explicit commitment the United States made, along with 188 other countries, to reduce child and maternal mortality when we agreed to the Millennium Development Goals. And if we fail to increase our current funding for child survival, then we run the risk of failing to live up to our promise to those who are most in need."

Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR), another original cosponsor of the legislation, commented: "Over the past three decades, U.S. funding and programs for child survival have helped save millions of lives but funding stagnated after 1997. Investing in child survival is critical for building a sustainable future for all of the world's children. The Senate took an important step today in achieving this goal."

The good news is that we know how to reduce child mortality. Nearly six million lives could be saved each year with a package of known, readily available and cost-efficient interventions like essential newborn care, antibiotics to treat pneumonia, oral rehydration solution to treat diarrhea, and vaccines to prevent life-threatening diarrhea. But, these measures are not available to all mothers and children who need them.

How would the Global Child Survival Act help? It would ramp up resources for newborn and child health programs, and make these solutions more available to the poorest families who need them. A House Foreign Affairs subcommittee will hold a hearing on the legislation next month. This legislation would renew American leadership in saving young lives by authorizing additional resources, creating an inter-agency Child and Maternal Health Task Force to make sure every dollar goes where it's needed most, expanding the Child Survival and Health Grants Program, and requiring annual progress reports from the president.

In a recent national poll conducted by the US Coalition for Child Survival, almost all Americans, including both Democrats and Republicans, placed saving children's lives as a top priority for U.S. international



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assistance, and a large majority of Americans (84 percent) support increasing resources to reduce the top preventable deaths of young children.

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*The US Coalition for Child Survival is a broad coalition of organizations and individuals united to strengthen United States and global commitment to improve the survival and health of children in developing countries. The Coalition represents non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, universities, foundations, corporations, and private voluntary organizations. For more information, see [www.child-survival.org](http://www.child-survival.org).*