



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

January 22, 1968

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
School of Medicine
Stanford University
Palo Alto, California

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

I have been following with interest your series of columns on premature births which have been featured in the Washington Post and Times-Herald. I certainly applaud a man of science who is spending so much time bringing this kind of vital information to the public. Too often, important scientific thinking is inadvertently denied American citizens simply because no one has thought to translate professional know-how into terms most people can best understand and implement.

One of the most recent factors being considered in relation to the problem of prematurity is that of the mother who is at high risk with relation to complications of pregnancy. Now that it is the stated policy of the U. S. Government to bring family planning services to all women in the United States who have heretofore been denied these services because they cannot afford private medical care, it is hoped that the incidence of premature births--with its concomitant factors of congenital defect and infant mortality--will be substantially reduced.

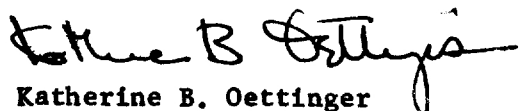
Indeed, it is noteworthy that the most significant decrease in infant mortality in the United States in 15 years occurred in 1965, when the rate declined from 24.7 per thousand live births to a provisional estimate of 23.4 per thousand. And this decrease appears to have continued into 1966.

Notwithstanding other factors at work, this reduction coincides with the extensive development and expansion of local maternal and child health services supported, in part, by the Children's Bureau. In almost all cases, family planning is an integral part of these services and it is estimated that more than 275,000 women received free information and supplies from these sources from June 1966 to this past June 1967.

If you should be interested in further information on the position of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare with regard to family planning, I would welcome the opportunity to talk about it with you.

With best wishes for your continued success, I am,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Katherine B. Oettinger". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Katherine B. Oettinger
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Population and Family Planning