

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 6, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to respectfully urge your Administration to end years of delays and finalize the updated Food and Drug Administration (FDA) seafood advisory to pregnant women swiftly. This is the third time a wide bipartisan group of Senators has written to you requesting your help removing roadblocks to finalizing the FDA advice to pregnant women on seafood consumption. Pregnant women, physicians and medical professionals, however, are still waiting despite numerous commitments in 2011, 2012 and 2013 to finalize the FDA advisory.

Unfortunately, the outdated 2004 FDA seafood advice has been interpreted as a recommendation to reduce or eliminate seafood consumption during pregnancy. According to the latest scientific studies, seafood rich in Omega-3s and essential nutrients improves cognitive and visual developments in unborn children and infants. Seafood is also high in protein and low in fat, and supports the healthy lifestyle promoted by the First Lady's Let's Move! initiative. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans reflects the latest science and recommends that pregnant women should eat at least eight ounces of seafood per week; however, the FDA estimates the average pregnant woman currently consumes less than two ounces per week. The Dietary Guidelines conclude that "the benefits of consuming seafood far outweigh the risks, even for pregnant women."

We understand that the updated FDA advice and accompanying net effects report has been drafted for months, but is stuck in intra-agency review. Each day the new FDA advice is delayed means pregnant women are without sound, science-driven recommendations to make informed decisions regarding seafood consumption during pregnancy. In the 27 months since a bipartisan group of Senators first wrote requesting your help, nearly 9 million babies have been born under outdated advice on seafood consumption. For many pregnant women, consistent federal advice may be the only source of nutrition recommendations they receive. These women cannot wait for bureaucratic infighting that is preventing the issuance of new FDA seafood advice.

We ask that your staff work directly with the Department of Health and Human Services to eliminate any remaining roadblocks and ensure that pregnant women receive new advice that is not only consistent with the latest science, but also drafted in a manner that the typical consumer can read and understand.

Sincerely,

May of Gardin

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cc: First Lady Michelle Obama
Honorable Denis McDonough, Chief of Staff to President Barack Obama
Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Honorable Margaret Hamburg, Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration