



November 19, 2009

**PROVISIONAL STEERING  
COMMITTEE**

- Alliance for Healthy Homes
- American Public Health Association
- American Society of Home Inspectors
- Association of State/Territories Health Officials
- Children's Health Forum
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Home Safety Council
- National Association of Realtors®
- National Center for Healthy Housing, Chair
- National Low Income Housing Coalition
- NeighborWorks America
- Rebuilding Together
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America
- Sustainable Community Development
- U.S. Green Building Council

The Honorable David Obey  
House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Room 2358-B Rayburn House Office Building  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
[send by email to Comm. Clerk Cheryl Smith]

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Room 131 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
[send by email to Ellen Murray, Comm. Clerk]

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The undersigned, representing a range of health, housing, environmental, low-income and other nonprofits, urge you to support an FY11 budget of \$52 million for the Center for Disease Control's Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Homes Program, an increase of \$20 million from FY10.

Childhood lead poisoning is one of the nation's most preventable illnesses. Children exposed to lead can suffer cognitive, neurological, behavioral, and other health problems. No safe level of exposure exists. Children are being poisoned primarily by leaded wall paint and lead-contaminated dust in older homes, leaded paint on toys and other consumer goods, water service pipes containing lead, and lead brought into homes from the workplace.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) Lead Poisoning Prevention Program funds prevention initiatives in 36 states and six large cities (Chicago, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, New York, and Philadelphia). Data from the past two decades show that CDC's program has been one of the most cost-effective federal investments in public health. From 1994 to 2006, the number of children with elevated blood lead levels has dropped 86%, from 890,000 to 121,000 (from 4.4% of all children to 0.6%).

The remaining children are at the highest risk yet are the toughest to reach. At the same time, we have learned that housing units at risk for lead exposure present much higher risks of several *other* health hazards, including:

- Asthma/allergy triggers, like mold, roaches and rodents
- Respiratory irritants, such as combustion gases and tobacco smoke
- Toxic chemicals, like pesticides and radon, and
- Safety hazards, such as broken stairs and no smoke detectors.

In response, CDC has partnered with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Housing and Urban Development in building a new model for eliminating lead and other health hazards through a “whole-house” approach. It revolves around deploying professionals, such as community health nurses and housing inspectors, to visit high-risk homes and assess them for health and safety hazards. Families are then referred to local government and nonprofit remediation programs. Because this collaborative model has proven to be so effective, the Surgeon General highlighted it in his recent *Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes* ([www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/healthyhomes/index.html](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/healthyhomes/index.html)).

A 2009 national survey shows how many American homes *still* endanger children:

- Only 1 in 10 built before 1978 has been tested for lead-based paint
- 66% lack a carbon monoxide detector
- Just 41% have repaired water damage or a plumbing leak
- Only 10% have tested for radon, and
- Just 18%, with children living in or frequenting the home, have installed safety devices, such as stair gates, cabinet locks, or window guards.

For CDC to expand its reach beyond lead poisoning and attack all these hazards together will require significantly more than \$32 million. But a \$20 million FY11 increase is a down payment, which our organizations are matching several times over with our own funds and manpower to provide housing interventions, professional training, parent education, and a range of other services. After many years of flat funding, we are very pleased that the new administration is moving forward to improve the health of our nation’s most vulnerable resource, our children.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me at (443) 539-4159 or [rmorley@nchh.org](mailto:rmorley@nchh.org). Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Morley  
Chair, National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition  
Executive Director, National Center for Healthy Housing

Patrick MacRoy  
Executive Director  
Alliance for Healthy Homes

Dana Bourland  
Executive Director  
Vice President, Green Initiatives  
Enterprise Community Partners

Ruth Ann Norton  
Executive Director  
Nat'l Coalition to End  
Childhood Lead Poisoning

Bryan Howard  
Manager, Congressional Affairs  
US Green Building Council

Gary A. Officer  
President and CEO  
Rebuilding Together

Melanie Hudson  
Executive Director  
Children's Health Forum

Sue Gunderson  
Executive Director  
CLEARCorps USA

Eileen Gunn  
Healthy Homes Project Director  
The Asthma Regional Council of New England

Georges C. Benjamin, MD  
Executive Director  
American Public Health  
Association

Meri-K Appy  
President  
Home Safety Council

Bill Richardson  
President  
American Society of Home  
Inspectors