

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we urge your support for \$35 million to fund the Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program to enable the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct lead poisoning surveillance programs in all states.

Lead poisoning is a preventable tragedy that dramatically impacts a child's health and ability to learn. Children under the age of six are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning, which can severely affect mental and physical development. At very high levels, lead poisoning can be fatal. Even low levels of lead can cause brain damage, which is why the CDC has determined that there is no "safe" level of lead for a child. Childhood exposure to lead has lifelong consequences, including decreased IQ and cognitive function, developmental delays, and behavior problems; very high levels can also cause seizures, coma, and even death.

While we have certainly made progress over the last couple of decades, our work is not done. There are more than 500,000 children in the U.S. under the age of five years old with blood lead poisoning and 24 million homes in the U.S. with lead-based paint hazards. Unfortunately, over the last couple of years, we have seen alarmingly high rates of lead poisoning in some communities like Flint, Michigan. We must continue to move forward with federal initiatives to combat lead poisoning across the country, and the CDC's Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program plays a critical role in identifying these lead hazards and the risk to children.

In fact, the CDC program is the only federal initiative to provide funding and support to states and local health departments to conduct vital surveillance of where, how, and when children are exposed to lead. This surveillance information is essential for health and housing agencies to best target funds and programs to the highest risk areas. While surveying for elevated blood lead levels, states and localities are also able to look for other home health hazards that cause respiratory diseases and cancer, such as mold, pests, or absence of carbon monoxide detectors.

This is a smart investment in the health and development of our children since the cost of lead poisoning reaches beyond children's health. For example, educational system costs are estimated at \$38,000 over three years per child with special education needs due to lead

poisoning. In fact, the societal costs of lead poisoning alone are estimated to be \$50 billion annually.

Thank you for your continued support of the CDC Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. We greatly appreciate your leadership and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

John Reed

Janne Shaker

Dick Durbin

Julius Brown

Robert Menendez

Tammy Duckworth

Ben Cardin

John Thune

Dianne Feinstein

Al Franken

Elizabeth Warren

Maggie Hassan

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Richard Blumenthal