



Mr. Scott Pruitt, Administrator
Office of the Administrator, Mail Code 1101A
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
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April 25, 2017

Dear EPA Administrator Pruitt:

The recent memorandum prepared by David Bloom, Acting Chief Financial Officer of the EPA, calls for the elimination of two programs critical to protecting the nation's children from lead poisoning. This contradicts the very goal stated by the President to repair crumbling communities and lift the trajectory of America's families. As you prepare your final budget proposal, we urge you to reverse this course and restore full funding for these programs. Not only is lead poisoning entirely preventable, but investing in stopping it protects families and saves money.

We represent thousands of organizations, parents, business leaders, and professionals working to end childhood lead poisoning, advance educational outcomes, and reduce long-term public and private costs. Currently, well over 500,000 children in this country have excessive levels of lead in their bodies, which causes neurological damage, behavior problems, and undermines their long-term learning, future earnings, and health. Yet we know how to fix the problem and eliminate this tragic and costly disease once and for all.

The two EPA programs proposed for elimination are the \$2.6 million Lead Risk Reduction Program and the \$14 million lead categorical grants to states. These programs support science-based standards in defining lead hazards that are necessary to protect pregnant women and vulnerable children; they require lead-safe work practices during renovation, repair, and painting; and they ensure that consumers seeking lead inspection, abatement, and risk assessment services can find qualified, trained individuals to do the work properly.

Taxpayers already absorb the economic costs of childhood lead poisoning, estimated at \$50.9 billion per year. And families, children, and communities across the country bear the social, educational, and medical costs of children with learning disabilities, brain damage, aggressive behavior, and long-term health problems. Parents sometimes are forced to spend thousands of dollars more to clean up contaminated homes caused by poor work practices. In short, the threatened EPA programs help to ensure that contractors work safely and they are a wise investment in our future—our children.

The EPA's memorandum suggests that state and local agencies can somehow step in and provide more effective services, but the evidence is clear that this is simply wishful thinking at best. If these programs

are eliminated, training, consumer education, compliance assistance, and enforcement will falter, and children will be harmed needlessly.

The nation's efforts to address childhood lead poisoning are led by EPA, HUD, and CDC, each with their own strengths and duties. This three-legged stool has worked well and childhood blood lead levels have declined by over 90% since the 1990s; but with over half a million children who still have high blood lead levels, there is much more to be done. Instead of pulling the rug out and eliminating these programs, EPA should help deliver on the nation's promise to end lead poisoning in a few short years.

At HUD, Secretary Ben Carson proposed to **increase** the funding for its lead hazard control program. But those programs (and other HUD home repair programs) rely on the qualified, trained abatement contractors and home renovators that the EPA lead programs ensure. Similarly, CDC works with healthcare providers to identify and protect poisoned children, but that means there must be access to qualified contractors properly trained to fix the problem.

For every dollar spent on controlling lead hazards, taxpayers see a return-on-investment of at least \$17. Countless studies have demonstrated this high return. One needs to look no further than the Flint debacle—a disaster caused by a shortsighted scheme, supposedly to save money, that in fact will cost millions more to clean up—to see that programs protecting our children should be among the new Administration's top priorities. It makes good business sense, it makes good public health and environmental policy, and it's the right thing to do.

We hope that you will join HUD Secretary Carson and increase (not decrease) funding for the Administration's lead poisoning prevention programs. As you consider your final budget request, we urge you to retain and fund the EPA lead risk reduction and renovation, repair, and painting programs.

Sincerely,

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