



National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

May 1, 2020

Dear Chair Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition, we would like to express our appreciation and thanks for the wonderful support lead poisoning prevention and healthy homes received in the Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations bill.

The current COVID-19 crisis has wreaked a heavy social and financial toll on the U.S. The pandemic is forcing more individuals, families, and children to remain homebound, increasing their exposure to housing hazards. As you consider the Fiscal Year 2021 funding bill, we urge you to continue to support the vital work of the Center for Environmental Health at CDC. We know the CDC effectively responds to a wide variety of crises, as we are seeing now. However, lead is its own tragic decades-long crisis. In response to this, we recommend increased funding for the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program from \$37 million to \$100 million, increased funding for the National Environmental Health Tracking Network from \$34 million to \$40 million, and increased funding for the National Asthma Control Program from \$30 million to \$34 million. All of these programs work to protect children and others from housing-related health hazards.

Across the country, millions of families are living in unhealthy housing conditions, struggling with issues like broken heating and plumbing systems, damaged or leaking roofs, mold, exposed wiring, and toxic chemicals. Overall, 40% of U.S. homes have at least one significant health or safety risk that places American families at risk.

While the percentage of children tested with high blood lead has decreased over 90% in the past 20 years, 270,000 children still have blood lead levels above the CDC reference value. The CDC's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program currently provides grants to 54 states, cities, and counties. It conducts needed surveillance of children exposed to lead, provides national data on childhood lead poisoning, ensures that children receive necessary case management, and enables local jurisdictions to take action before children are exposed to lead instead of reacting only after they have been harmed. Screening and surveillance data currently provide the foundation for targeting community prevention activities to areas where the risk is

highest and increasing funding for this program to \$100 million will allow this program to offer increased surveillance grants to all 50 states.

CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program supports environmental public health tracking and data networks 25 states and one city. This program has 20 datasets, 107 indicators, and 419 health measures, ranging from asthma to drinking water quality to carbon monoxide exposure, that are used by state and local health officials to prevent sickness and death. Increased funding for this program from \$34 to \$40 million would support at least three additional states and should be viewed as a down payment toward funding all 50 states and DC.

CDC's National Asthma Control Program funds states, localities, and other organizations to improve asthma surveillance, awareness, and education. The program currently supports asthma control programs in 22 states and in the jurisdictions of Houston and Puerto Rico. Asthma death rates have decreased by 27%, and costs due to asthma illness and death have decreased by \$23.1 billion. Increased funding to this program of \$34 million will allow the CDC to continue this important work and allow additional funding for state grants.

The National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition is a broad, voluntary coalition of over 400 organizations working to improve housing conditions nationwide. The coalition promotes policies for safe and healthy housing in the United States, with special emphasis on those who are disproportionately impacted. Congress should protect the most vulnerable citizens, children, and the elderly. This funding will help to accomplish that aim. These vital programs must be funded in order to support healthy housing for all.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and for your continued support of lead poisoning prevention and healthy homes.

Please contact Sarah Goodwin at sarah@nshhcoalition.org if we can provide further information.

Sincerely,

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