



National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition

Letters from the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition to Members of Congress (May 6, 2022)

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The National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition is a broad, voluntary coalition working to improve housing conditions nationwide through education and outreach to key national stakeholders and federal public decision makers. The coalition promotes policies for safe and healthy housing in the United States with special emphasis on those who are disproportionately impacted. Learn more about the coalition at <http://bit.ly/NSHHC>.



National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

May 6, 2022

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

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 2022 appropriations bill. We would also like to acknowledge the president's budget request and its support for these programs at CDC, specifically its funding increase to the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, which is a step in the right direction toward the needed funding for these programs.

The devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have further demonstrated the connection between housing quality and health outcomes, how these impacts disproportionately affect specific populations including communities of color and low-income communities, and the necessity of investing in addressing healthy housing hazards and poor housing quality. As the country continues to invest in COVID-19 recovery, significant funding is still needed to increase housing affordability and stability, fix substandard housing, and provide innovative, flexible, and equitable services to those impacted by healthy housing hazards. As you consider the Fiscal Year 2023 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 continue to see. However, lead is its own tragic decade's long crisis. In response to this, we recommend increased funding for the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program from \$41 million to \$100 million, increased funding for the National Environmental Health Tracking Network from \$34 million to \$54 million, and increased funding for the National Asthma Control Program from \$30.5 million to \$40 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, 500,000 children still have blood lead levels above the CDC reference value. The CDC's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program currently provides grants to 61 states, cities, territories, 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 and expand support for primary prevention activities. This is especially important after the reduction of the blood lead reference value from 5 to 3.5 µg/dL, doubling the number of children needing these services, and after screening rates dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program supports environmental public health tracking and data networks in 25 states and one city. This program has 20 datasets, 107 indicators, and 419 health measures ranging from asthma to drinking water quality and carbon monoxide exposure, which are used by state and local health officials to prevent sickness and death. Increased funding for this program from \$34 to \$54 million would fund 15 additional states. These 15 additional states have already been identified by CDC as ready to enroll in this program as soon as funding is available and should be viewed as a down payment on funding all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

CDC's National Asthma Control Program funds states, territories, localities, and other organizations to improve asthma surveillance, awareness, and education. The program currently supports asthma control programs in 25 states and jurisdictions. Asthma death rates have decreased by 27%, and costs due to asthma illness and death have decreased by \$23.1 billion. Increased funding of this program to \$40 million will allow the CDC to continue this important work and allow additional funding for state grants. The current funding level for this program represents an average of just \$1.17 invested in asthma prevention for each of the 26.5 million Americans living with asthma. In contrast, between 2012 and 2018, an average of \$3.5 billion per year was paid by Medicaid just for asthma inhalers. Statewide asthma coalitions, funded by NACP, are one of the most direct and measurable ways that human, financial, and organizational resources are leveraged. To fund all 50 states and at least two territories, and to invest in the equity and efficacy that coalitions are shown to generate, the NACP appropriation should be \$65 million. The NSHHC proposes increasing funding to this level by at least FY27, if not sooner.

The National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition is a broad 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. 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,

Gillian Mittelstaedt
Co-Chair
National Safe and Healthy Housing
Coalition
Issaquah, WA

Amanda Reddy
Co-Chair
National Safe and Healthy Housing
Coalition
Columbia, MD

Organizational Signatures

National Organizations

Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network
Clean Water Action
Earthjustice
Ecology Center
Elevate
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
Lead and Environmental Hazards Association
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Network of Public Health Institutes
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium

Regional, State, and Local Organizations

Alameda County Healthy Homes Department
California Safe Schools
Children First
EnviroPlan, LLC
Healthy Housing Omaha
Learning Disabilities Association of Arkansas
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Regional Asthma Management and Prevention
Revitalize Community Development Corporation
Sullivan County, NH, Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes Program
Women for a Healthy Environment

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The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
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May 6, 2022

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

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 2022 appropriations bill. We would also like to acknowledge the president's budget request and its support for these programs at CDC, specifically its funding increase to the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, which is a step in the right direction toward the needed funding for these programs.

The devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have further demonstrated the connection between housing quality and health outcomes, how these impacts disproportionately affect specific populations including communities of color and low-income communities, and the necessity of investing in addressing healthy housing hazards and poor housing quality. As the country continues to invest in COVID-19 recovery, significant funding is still needed to increase housing affordability and stability, fix substandard housing, and provide innovative, flexible, and equitable services to those impacted by healthy housing hazards. As you consider the Fiscal Year 2023 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 continue to see. However, lead is its own tragic decade's long crisis. In response to this, we recommend increased funding for the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program from \$41 million to \$100 million, increased funding for the National Environmental Health Tracking Network from \$34 million to \$54 million, and increased funding for the National Asthma Control Program from \$30.5 million to \$40 million. All of these programs work to protect children and others from housing-related health hazards.

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The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
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May 6, 2022

Dear Chair Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce:

On behalf of the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition, we would like to express our appreciation and thanks for the support lead poisoning prevention and healthy homes received in the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations bill. In particular, we applaud the increased funding for the radon program and the lead categorical grant program. We would also like to acknowledge the president's budget request and its support for these programs at EPA, which is a step in the right direction toward the needed funding for these programs.

The devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have further demonstrated the connection between housing quality and health outcomes, how these impacts disproportionately affect specific populations including communities of color and low-income communities, and the necessity of investing in addressing healthy housing hazards and poor housing quality. As the country continues to invest in COVID-19 recovery, significant funding is still needed to increase housing affordability and stability, fix substandard housing, and provide innovative, flexible, and equitable services to those impacted by healthy housing hazards. As you consider the Fiscal Year 2023 funding bill, we urge you to continue to support the vital work of these programs and increase funding to a total of \$119.5 million. This includes \$67 million for EPA's Categorical Grants for lead and radon, \$16 million for the Lead Risk Reduction Program, \$5 million for the Indoor Air Radon Program, \$23.5 million for the Reduce Risk from Indoor Air Program, and \$8 million for the Children and Other Sensitive Populations program.

EPA's Categorical Grant: Lead and Lead Risk Reduction programs are key to the nation's childhood lead poisoning prevention efforts. Through funding for states and EPA regional offices, these programs support science-based standards used to define what lead hazards are in order to protect pregnant women and children; they require lead-safe work practices during renovation, repair, and painting work; and they ensure that consumers seeking lead inspection, abatement, and risk assessment services can find qualified, trained individuals to perform the work properly. Communities require more resources to address the needs of lead-poisoned children, especially a fully trained workforce to carry out lead abatement and lead-safe work practices. We urge Congress to increase funding of these programs to \$50 million and \$16 million, respectively.

EPA's Categorical Grant: Radon, Indoor Air: Radon, and Reduce Risk from Indoor Air programs work to protect residents from health risks associated with indoor air, including asthma triggers located in the home, mold (a particular concern in the aftermath of flooding), and radon. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. As awareness of radon as a public health issue has increased, the demand for radon mitigation services is also expected to increase. We urge Congress to increase the funding of these programs at \$17 million, \$5 million, and \$23.5 million, respectively

EPA's Children and Other Sensitive Populations: Agency coordination ensures that agency programs protect children's environmental health, including work on developing regulations, improving science policy, implementing programs at the community level, and measuring progress on children's health. The incidence of asthma and a number of other chronic diseases is increasing nationwide. Therefore, more resources are needed to address the needs of these sensitive populations. We urge Congress to increase funding of this program to \$8 million.

EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants Program provides funding to over 1,500 community-based organizations, tribal governments, and Native American organizations to support and empower communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues. The National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition applauds FY22 funding of \$94 million as it represents a good step forward in supporting healthy housing and environmental justice priorities. We support President Biden's proposed budget of \$294.9 million for this program in FY23 and encourage Congress to adopt that proposed increase and support the five proposed and existing grant programs—the Environmental Justice Competitive Grant Program, the Environmental Justice Community Grants Program, the Environmental Justice State Grant Program, the Tribal Environmental Justice Grant Program, and the Participatory Research Grant Program.

The National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition is a broad 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. 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. The nation's children will benefit enormously from your leadership.

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

Sincerely,

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Co-Chair
National Safe and Healthy Housing
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Issaquah, WA

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The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
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Dear Chair Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

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EPA's Categorical Grant: Radon, Indoor Air: Radon, and Reduce Risk from Indoor Air programs work to protect residents from health risks associated with indoor air, including asthma triggers located in the home, mold (a particular concern in the aftermath of flooding), and radon. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. As awareness of radon as a public health issue has increased, the demand for radon mitigation services is also expected to increase. We urge Congress to increase the funding of these programs at \$17 million, \$5 million, and \$23.5 million, respectively

EPA's Children and Other Sensitive Populations: Agency coordination ensures that agency programs protect children's environmental health, including work on developing regulations, improving science policy, implementing programs at the community level, and measuring progress on children's health. The incidence of asthma and a number of other chronic diseases is increasing nationwide. Therefore, more resources are needed to address the needs of these sensitive populations. We urge Congress to increase funding of this program to \$8 million.

EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants Program provides funding to over 1,500 community-based organizations, tribal governments, and Native American organizations to support and empower communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues. The National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition applauds FY22 funding of \$94 million as it represents a good step forward in supporting healthy housing and environmental justice priorities. We support President Biden's proposed budget of \$294.9 million for this program in FY23 and encourage Congress to adopt that proposed increase and support the five proposed and existing grant programs—the Environmental Justice Competitive Grant Program, the Environmental Justice Community Grants Program, the Environmental Justice State Grant Program, the Tribal Environmental Justice Grant Program, and the Participatory Research Grant Program.

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National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition

The Honorable David Price
Chair
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
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Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
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May 6, 2022

Dear Chair Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

On behalf of the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition, we would like to express our appreciation and thanks for the wonderful support for lead poisoning prevention and healthy homes received in the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations bill. In particular, we applaud the increase from \$360 million to \$415 million for the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the new funding for radon demonstration programs, the continued funding to address aging in place, and encourage coordination with the Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

The devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have further demonstrated the connection between housing quality and health outcomes, how these impacts disproportionately affect specific populations including communities of color and low-income communities, and the necessity of investing in addressing healthy housing hazards and poor housing quality. As the country continues to invest in COVID-19 recovery, significant funding is still needed to increase housing affordability and stability, fix substandard housing, and provide innovative, flexible, and equitable services to those impacted by healthy housing hazards.

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2023 funding bill, we urge you to continue to support the vital work of this office and increase funding to a total of \$810 million, including \$500 million for HUD's Lead Paint program, \$300 million for the Healthy Homes Program, and \$10 million for the Lead Technical Studies Program.

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.

HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes has directly addressed lead and other housing-related health hazards over the last three decades through programs that treat individual units for lead hazards, improve lead safety with enforcement actions and upgrade substandard

housing with healthy homes improvements. Despite progress, over three million homes with young children still have significant lead paint hazards. The nation must make even stronger investments to prevent more families from suffering needlessly. Recent increases in funding has allowed the office to provide new grants to state and local programs; the figures proposed by the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition will build on that momentum. In addition, providing robust funding for the Healthy Homes Program is especially important and will reduce deferrals from weatherization and other programs, reach further into rural populations, and serve healthy homes issues separate from lead.

We also recommend that the income eligibility criteria for HUD's lead paint program be streamlined and made consistent with Medicare, weatherization, HOME, and other allied health and housing programs to reduce grantee administrative burdens. We also suggest that HUD reform their criteria for rating Technical Studies grant application to conform them with the office's other programs, to give greater weight to applicants who demonstrate early and robust engagement with marginalized populations (where it aligns with the research topic), and to include requirements for communicating findings to the community beyond peer-reviewed publication.

The monetary benefits far outweigh the costs. A recent study shows that removing lead paint hazards from older housing provides at least \$1.39 return for every \$1 invested. By providing the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes with \$810 million in FY23, we can ensure that this critical initiative will continue protecting families from these preventable health hazards and yield positive societal benefits.

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