

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 27, 2018

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development, and Related
Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Price
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development, and Related
Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As negotiations proceed on funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, we respectfully request full funding for efforts to prevent lead poisoning and promote healthy housing, including \$35 million for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention program, and \$176 million in total funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes. The HUD funding includes \$30 million for the Healthy Homes program and \$5 million for Lead Technical Studies Grant Program, which addresses additional home health hazards.

Hundreds of thousands of children aged one to five years old in the U.S. have blood lead levels above 5 micrograms per deciliter, 150 percent above acceptable levels. Across the country, local health departments are grappling with lead exposure in young children and inadequate resources to address the issue. In the last year, there have been reports from New York City to the Hawaiian Islands and from Waco to Chicago about local communities dealing with elevated lead levels in children.

In New York City, families have been placed in homes known to contain toxic lead paint, after untrained and uncertified workers performed lead abatement. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Health Department released a report that children with elevated lead levels had been returned to their homes without testing the home for lead toxicity. Unfortunately, paint is not the only source

of lead exposure across the country. Nationwide, more than 5,300 water systems violate existing lead regulations, exposing 18 million Americans to unsafe levels of lead and copper. Several major cities, including Philadelphia, Chicago, Milwaukee, Baltimore and Boston have water systems that have lead concentrations well above the federal limit. Appallingly, testing of school water systems has led to many water fountains being deemed “off limits” and some 30 schools in Newark, New Jersey, had to turn off their taps entirely. We must adequately invest in national lead poisoning prevention programs.

The current “acceptable” level of lead exposure is 2 micrograms of lead per deciliter, and anything over 5 micrograms is considered “unacceptable,” but even small amounts of lead can cause serious health problems. The impact of lead poisoning ranges from reductions in cognitive function, developmental delays, behavior modification, learning disabilities, seizures, comas, and even death. Furthermore, as we’ve seen across the nation, lead poisoning continues to disproportionately impact low-income areas and communities of color, contributing to racial, health, and economic disparities across the country. The effects of lead poisoning on children are especially harmful, and the CDC has determined that there is no “safe” level of lead for a child. The annual costs of lead poisoning are over \$50 billion, and these costs are especially regrettable since lead poisoning is entirely preventable.

Providing the CDC’s Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention program with \$35 million in FY 2018 will allow lead poisoning surveillance to be conducted nationally. Unfortunately, current surveillance is limited to 32 states and the District of Columbia due to past funding cuts. No other agency or organization in the country collects this information, which is used to identify high blood lead level outbreaks quickly and develop rapid responses. Additionally, the funding will allow the CDC to help communities implement strategies to prevent lead poisoning so that abatement and other costs are never incurred. The CDC’s current efforts prevent approximately 100,000 children from being poisoned by lead each year. Properly funding this program will protect more children and expand the progress made in lead poisoning prevention.

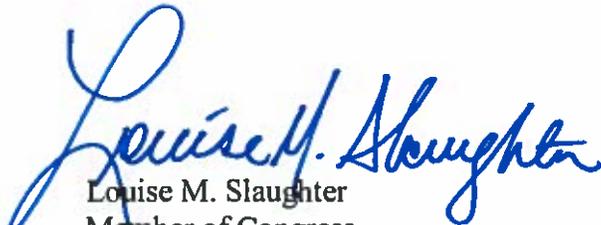
Furthermore, returning the name of this program to “Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention” will allow for a more holistic approach when conducting home assessments. Other hazards in the home, such as radon, carbon monoxide poisoning, and pests, can cause injury and disease. Allowing for home assessments to inspect, collect data, and perform interventions on a broad array of home health hazards in a single visit makes practical sense and is more cost efficient.

Providing HUD’s Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes with \$176 million in FY 2018 is critical to its continued success. Since 1993, this office has pursued several strategies, which have together contributed to a 70 percent reduction in childhood lead poisoning cases. This office has successfully ensured 190,000 additional units are lead-safe, and addressed health conditions in over 20,000 substandard housing units. HUD estimates that the number of children under age five with blood lead levels above five micrograms per deciliter in 2010 would have included an additional 265,000 children if not for HUD’s actions to control hazards in these housing units. HUD’s Lead Technical Studies Grant Program has also helped achieve major breakthroughs such as identifying improved methods of hazard identification and control. A \$10 million appropriation will continue increasing the already high return on investment provided by

this HUD office. Properly funding HUD's programs is a cost-effective way to keep children healthy and save an estimated \$84 billion in lead poisoning-related medical, educational and legal costs.

Both HUD and the CDC play critical roles in preventing, identifying, and responding to lead contamination in communities across the country. These efforts are critical to ensuring our children grow up healthy and safe. Thank you for your continued support of lead poisoning prevention and healthy housing. We greatly appreciate your leadership and consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress