

March 28, 2012

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg, Chairman
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2358B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6024

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6157

The Honorable Thomas Harkin, Chairman
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We the undersigned public and environmental health organizations write to express concern regarding proposed funding levels for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH). We support funding for NCEH at \$181.66 million for fiscal year (FY) 2013.

Investment in CDC activities has declined over the past several years and NCEH has absorbed a disproportionately large share of the imposed cuts. Since fiscal year 2009, NCEH funding has been cut approximately 25 percent. These spending reductions have occurred at a time when we must strengthen our efforts to understand and address the environmental causes of injury, infectious disease, and chronic illness. Meanwhile, chronic disease rates continue to climb, inflicting the burden of preventable death and illness on millions of Americans and contributing to the growing cost of health care.

It is our collective view that NCEH cannot afford to sustain additional funding cuts without critically damaging our nation's core environmental health infrastructure. The cuts implemented to the Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention program for fiscal year 2012 alone will jeopardize the health of families living in homes nationwide where exposure to lead, rodent infestation, and other risk factors is likely. Lead poisoning remains a significant environmental public health threat with nearly 450,000 children across the United States in need of services to reduce their exposures. And over the course of nearly ten years, still less than half of all states receive funding to participate in the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network. Participation will decline further under any further cuts.

Yet there are successes and important outcomes being achieved. The NCEH Environmental Health Laboratory (EHL) is a state-of-the-art research facility that conducts research that few, and in some cases no, other U.S. research laboratories can. EHL conducts laboratory testing for

BPA, speciated arsenic, uranium, mercury, and many other toxic radionuclides. In 2011, EHL helped to make significant strides in our understanding of Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID) that will directly impact newborn screenings. It also developed new tests for vitamin D and testosterone that will aid related research and medical treatment for a host of diseases and conditions. EHL will also continue to work with many different groups to provide exposure data for investigations and public health emergencies and roughly 60 to 70 different exposure studies. A modest increase in investment would permit EHL to conduct standardizations of key cardiovascular biomarkers, as recommended by the committee report language accompanying the FY2012 spending bill, as well as expand biomonitoring efforts of trans, polyunsaturated, and saturated fats. Both efforts would have key implications for addressing cardiovascular disease and obesity in this country.

Our organizations strongly recommend that the National Asthma Control Program and the Healthy Homes/Lead Poisoning Prevention Program remain separate and distinct programs. The National Asthma Control Program, for which we request \$25.3 million for FY13, works to reduce the burden of asthma, which affects 25 million Americans including seven million children. The 36 state and territorial programs funded by the National Asthma Control Program include surveillance, environmental measures to reduce exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollutants, awareness and self-management education, and appropriate healthcare services. The Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, for which we request \$29.3 million for FY13, serves the 12.3 million children with harmful lead levels. The 35 state programs funded by the program screen children for lead poisoning, track the incidence of the disease, inspect homes for environmental hazards, and conduct community lead poisoning prevention initiatives.

Since its inception, the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program has made tremendous progress for a fraction of the initial estimated cost and is proving to be critical to furthering our understanding of how the human environment impacts our health. Today the program is helping to, for example, reduce asthma hospitalizations in New York, to provide cooling centers to help reduce ER visits in California, and to assuage cancer fears in Maryland. A modest increase in investment would permit the program to fund both additional states and increase the number of data included in the system. NCEH is also addressing the serious public health consequences of climate change such as heat related death and sickness, an increase in food, water and vector-borne diseases, and the health impacts of severe drought, including malnutrition. CDC's climate and health program leads efforts to help state, local health departments and communities prepare for and adapt to climate change.

Our organizations urge you to support funding for built environment activities within the National Center for Environmental Health. This small line-item supports the Healthy Community Design Initiative, which provides essential expert assistance and consultation across HHS and national leadership on the impacts of the built environment on health including physical activity levels. In addition, HCEDI has provides technical assistance, research, support and resources to state and local public health workers on the built environment on health. This and other important work at NCEH must be preserved. And we must also begin to restore the critical funding that has been removed over the past several years. **We urge Congress to direct \$181,660,000 to NCEH for fiscal year 2013.** This level of funding would restore the drastic cut

made to the Healthy Homes Initiative (lead control program) in fiscal year 2012 and provide for an additional valuable targeted increase (8.6%) to certain NCEH programs.

We understand that our federal budget faces many long-term challenges, but we also believe strongly that a commitment to and strong investment in environmental public health activities will be critical to our nation's long term fiscal and physical health. We thank you for considering this recommendation.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Landscape Architects
Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs
Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Asthma Regional Council of New England
ATIV Software
Boston Healthy Homes and Schools Collaborative
Boston Public Health Commission
Breast Cancer Fund
Cambridge Public Health Department (Cambridge, MA)
Childhood Lead Action Project (Providence, RI)
Children's Environmental Health Network
Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning
Congress for a New Urbanism
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island
Hartford Regional Lead Treatment Center (Hartford, CT)
Health Resources In Action
Human Impact Partners
Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance
MaineHealth
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of Health
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Environmental Health Association
National Nursing Centers Consortium
Natural Resources Defense Council
Partners Asthma Center at Brigham and Women's Hospital
Public Health Law & Policy
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Trust for America's Health