

March 31, 2014

The Honorable Jack Kingston, 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 Tom 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 Jerry Moran, 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 you in support of fiscal 2015 appropriations for public health and prevention activities at CDC's National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH). 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. According to the World Health Organization, environmental factors account for roughly a quarter of our current disease burden and 23 percent of all deaths.

However, our nation's investments in studying, understanding, and improving environmental health have been severely cut in recent years, particularly as it pertains to funding levels for NCEH. **We urge Congress to restore NCEH to fiscal year 2010 levels (\$181,004,000) for fiscal year 2015.**

From fiscal year 2009 to 2012, NCEH funding was cut by approximately 25 percent. While the 2014 omnibus was able to restore some funding, current funding levels are not adequate to meet the health needs CDC has identified, including but not limited to:

- Reducing the prevalence of asthma morbidity and mortality by increasing adherence to guidelines-based care;
- Protecting children from the health risks of hazardous exposures, including lead;
- Ensuring safe drinking water;
- Using laboratory science to detect, diagnose, and prevent environmental disease; and
- Addressing environmental health aspects of transportation and other components of community design.

As local and state health departments cope with ongoing budget cuts at the local, state and federal level, they are dependent upon CDC for data and leadership in environmental health that helps to spur action at the local level.

Current funding for NCEH is simply inadequate. It only enables us to fund half of states to work on health tracking and only five states to measure chemicals in people (biomonitoring). Furthermore, we are making staggeringly minimal investments into building healthier or more resilient communities against the ever-growing threat of extreme weather and the other negative health impacts of climate change. Finally, funding has proven effective yet insufficient in countering rising rates of asthma and it prevents us from identifying, let alone helping, the over 500,000 American children that are still being exposed to dangerously high levels of lead.

Controlling our long-term federal deficit and health care spending will require us to make and maintain serious investments in public health and other infrastructure to put the focus on prevention that will keep Americans healthy, happy, and working. 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 Lung Association
American Public Health Association
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Breast Cancer Fund
Children's Environmental Health Network
Mount Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Environmental Health Association
National Resources Defense Council
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Trust for America's Health