

August 18, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Louise Slaughter
Chairwoman, Rules Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2469 RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Congresswoman Slaughter:

The undersigned groups would like to express our appreciation for your reintroduction of the Coordinated Environmental Public Health Network Act of 2009, which would require the establishment of a Coordinated Environmental Public Health Network, authorize grants to States for the establishment of State Networks, authorize funding for applied epidemiology fellowships, and authorize funding to expand the scope and amount of biomonitoring data collected.

As you know, the objective of Environmental Public Health Tracking Program is to track environmental hazards and the diseases with which they may be associated. The Tracking Program helps us to identify populations at risk, establish potential relationships between environmental hazards and disease, and can guide intervention and prevention strategies. Expansion of the Network will help to enhance our understanding of the association between environmental hazards and human health.

Similarly, through the Environmental Health Laboratory's biomonitoring activities, we can measure with great precision actual levels of chemicals in people's bodies and determine which population groups are at high risk for exposure and adverse health effects. It is essential that we continue to expand our collection of biomonitoring data, which helps us to monitor exposure trends over time and assess public health interventions. Many public health successes, ranging from the restrictions on smoking in public places to the permanent ban of three phthalates and the provisional ban of another three phthalates used in children's toys, have been informed by data obtained through biomonitoring.

Finally, we also need to assure that we have adequate public health capacity. With that in mind, we appreciate your inclusion of an authorization for the training and placement in State and local health departments of applied epidemiology fellows. Epidemiologists serve a critical role in conducting public health surveillance, and their services are very important to state and local health departments.

It is the federal government that must provide the national leadership and resources to initiate the action required to protect Americans from environmental hazards. It is critical that we have the ability to track the relationship between environmental exposures and the incidence and distribution of disease. Toward that end, we would like to commend your leadership through introduction of this legislation. Thank you again for your efforts, and we look forward to working with you on other important public health initiatives in the future.

Sincerely,

American Public Health Association
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Breast Cancer Fund
Environmental Epidemiology Program, Tennessee Department of Health
Healthy Homes Collaborative
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Environmental Health Association
Public Health Foundation
Trust for America's Health