

May 5, 2020

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

Dear Chairs McCollum and Murkowski and Ranking Members Joyce and Udall:

The undersigned public health and environmental health organizations thank you for the \$2 million increase for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in the FY 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. As the first increase in funding that ATSDR has received in over a decade, the additional funding will allow ATSDR to enhance its mission by expanding its support to health departments, recruit additional staff to investigate community concerns and increase its technical support to healthcare and public health professionals. We are also grateful for the \$12.5 million in emergency supplemental appropriations provided to ATSDR for COVID-19 preparedness and response activities including for mapping of disease outbreak hotspots and providing guidance on safe disinfectant practices and healthy home environments.

We urge you to build upon last year's additional funding with an additional increase of \$12 million for ATSDR in the FY 2021 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. ATSDR protects the health of our communities in a variety of ways by preventing exposure to harmful contaminants in our soil, water and air; responding to requests from communities across the country to protect people from exposure to harmful levels of substances in the environment; providing funds and support to state and local health departments and supporting environmental health professionals in regional and field offices; and, along with Atlanta-based staff at ATSDR headquarters, experts are ready 24/7 to respond to environmental-health threats from natural disasters, chemical spills and other emergencies.

An increase to the agency's FY 2021 budget would allow ATSDR to continue the progress made with the FY 2020 funding increase. A funding increase would also significantly enhance the agency's ability to respond to community requests for assistance, fund and support state and local health departments and protect the nation's health. Without additional funding, ATSDR will be:

- Unable to respond to all critical requests from the public about harmful exposures. ATSDR could focus on only the most urgent requests and would need to prioritize investigations by current exposures and greatest threat for illness and/or death. While the FY 2020 increase will expand some of ATSDR's work on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS),

ATSDR still cannot expand to most of the many communities across the U.S. concerned about exposure to PFAS in drinking water.

- Required to reduce funding to state grantees. Although ATSDR is able to increase the number of states receiving funding in 2020, without additional increases ATSDR's funding will not keep up with demand or inflation. The agency will not be able to maintain its current level of funding to its state grantees without additional resources. This would result in fewer individuals being protected from environmental exposure to harmful chemicals such as PFAS, polychlorinated biphenyls, mercury, lead, benzene and dioxin.
- Unable to conduct site investigations in a timely and efficient manner. ATSDR is mandated by law to become involved with all sites that are on or proposed for the National Priorities List. Currently, over 1,300 sites are on EPA's National Priorities List. Last year, EPA placed 15 new sites on the list, and 53 more are proposed to be added. Without new resources, ATSDR's already limited budget will not be able to keep up with the demand.
- Limited in its ability to protect young children from hazardous exposures. ATSDR has discovered multiple early childcare and education centers in which young children were at risk for hazardous environmental exposures. ATSDR has developed solutions that are modeled on successful programs to ensure safe places for early care and education in several states, but is limited in its ability to share this information with its current funding.
- Limited in its ability to provide technical assistance to property owners, communities, and local and state governments to address hazards during redevelopment. ATSDR would not be able to maintain the same level of assistance to communities to guide the redevelopment of vacant, blighted or unused properties by ensuring that health hazards are considered and mitigated.

Unfortunately, environmental health hazards are not going away anytime soon, and now is the time to act to increase support for ATSDR's important activities. We thank you for your past support and we urge Congress to provide ATSDR with this much needed additional funding to ensure we can protect all of our communities from environmental health threats that they face each day.

Sincerely,

Allergy & Asthma Network
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Community Psychiatry
American College of Clinical Pharmacy
American Medical Women's Association (AMWA)
American Public Health Association
American School Health Association
American Sexual Health Association

American Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgery
American Thoracic Society
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Children's Environmental Health Network
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Endocrine Society
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
Health Resources in Action
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Environmental Health Association
National League for Nursing
National Medical Association
National Network of Public Health Institutes
Prevention Institute
Society for Public Health Education
Trust for America's Health