

March 19, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health &  
Human Services, Education &  
Related Agencies Appropriations  
Room 131 DSOB  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health &  
Human Services, Education &  
Related Agencies Appropriations  
Room 2358-B RHOB  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health &  
Human Services, Education & Related  
Agencies Appropriations  
Room 156 DSOB  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health &  
Human Services, Education & Related  
Agencies Appropriations  
Room 1016 LHOB  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Harkin & Obey and Ranking Members Cochran & Tiahrt:

The undersigned organizations would like to express our strong support for providing increased funding for CDC's Environmental Health Laboratory and the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program (Health Tracking Program) in the FY 2011 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

As you know, through the Environmental Health Laboratory's biomonitoring activities, we can measure with great precision actual levels of more than 450 chemicals and nutritional indicators in people's bodies. This information helps public health officials to determine which population groups are at high risk for exposure and adverse health effects, assess public health interventions, and monitor exposure trends over time.

In just this past year, CDC has worked with state health departments, academic partners and others to provide exposure information for more than 50 public health investigations and studies. It has also published the *Fourth National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals*, which presents exposure information for 212 environmental chemicals in Americans' blood and urine. Due to recent funding increases for this program, CDC has also been able to fund three states for state biomonitoring activities. We enthusiastically support these state biomonitoring efforts, but were disappointed that another 21 quality state proposals were turned down due to lack of funding.

Unfortunately, the President's FY 2011 budget proposes a \$1.3 million cut for this program. If enacted, this cut would mean that the Environmental Health Laboratory will not be able to implement a quality assurance program for biomonitoring measurements produced by state biomonitoring grantees.

**To enhance our national and state-level biomonitoring capacity, we support a \$19.6 million increase for CDC's Environmental Health Laboratory in FY 2011.** Ten million dollars would be used to fund 7-10 grantees, either individual states or consortia of states, to conduct biomonitoring. An additional \$7.6 million would be used for intramural activities, including increasing the number of chemicals CDC measures, providing training and quality assurance for state laboratories awarded biomonitoring funds; and increasing the number of studies used to assess health effects associated with exposure to environmental chemicals. Additionally, \$2 million would support the *National Report on Biochemical Indicators of Diet and Nutrition in the U.S. Population*.

We also strongly support CDC's Health Tracking Program. The program's objective is to track environmental hazards and the diseases with which they may be associated. The web-based National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network launched this past summer. CDC is continuing to enhance the Network and has included additional cancer data, plus new data on reproductive health outcomes and birth defects.

Currently, CDC funds just 22 states and one city to build and implement state-based health tracking networks that will feed into the national Network. We thank the Committee for the generous increase provided to the Tracking Program in FY 2009, which enabled CDC to add six grantees. One additional state will be funded due to the increase in the Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations for this program, for a total of 24 grantees. Health officials in *all* states need integrated health and environmental data so that they can make sound choices that protect the public's health. **With that in mind, we urge the Committee to provide \$50 million for the Health Tracking Program in FY 2011.** This level of funding would enable CDC to fund up to 13 new grantees (states, cities, or counties) and would help to expand the quality and quantity of health and environmental information available through the Network.

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. Understanding these connections will allow prevention efforts to better protect the public health and save health care dollars over the long term. Toward that end, we respectfully request that you continue to increase investment in CDC's Environmental Health Laboratory and Health Tracking Program. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Organizational Signatories:

Alaska Community Action on Toxics  
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities  
American Lung Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Public Health Association  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals

Association of State & Territorial Health Officials  
Autism Society  
Breast Cancer Action  
Breast Cancer Fund  
Center for Environmental Health  
Center for Health, Environment & Justice  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
Children's Environmental Health Institute  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Citizens' Environmental Coalition  
Clean New York  
Clean Water Action  
Clean Water Action Connecticut  
Clean Water Action Rhode Island  
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service  
Commonweal  
Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Environment Illinois  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Environmental Health Fund  
Environmental Working Group  
Families Against Cancer & Toxics  
Farmworker Justice  
Galveston-Houston Association for Smog Prevention and Mothers for Clean Air  
Glynn Environmental Coalition (GA)  
Greenpeace  
Illinois PIRG  
Indiana Toxics Action  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Iowa Breast Cancer Education  
Kentucky Environmental Foundation  
Learning Disabilities Association of America  
March of Dimes Foundation  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy  
Movement Strategy Center  
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Health Data Organizations  
National Association of Local Boards of Health  
National Disease Clusters Alliance  
National Environmental Health Association  
National Research Center for Women & Families  
Natural Resources Council of Maine  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
OMB Watch

Oregon Center for Environmental Health  
Oregon Department of Human Services, Public Health Division  
Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Public Health Institute  
Tennessee Department of Health, Environmental Epidemiology Program  
The Annie Appleseed Project  
Trust for America's Health  
U.S. Public Interest Research Group  
Washington Toxics Coalition  
Western Colorado Association of Environmental Health Officers'  
Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group  
Women's Health & Environmental Network  
Women's Voices for the Earth

Individual Signatories:

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