

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 8, 2016

The Honorable Shaun Donovan  
Director, Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Donovan,

We respectfully request that you fully fund efforts to prevent lead poisoning and promote healthy housing in the President's Fiscal Year 2017 (FY 2017) Budget Request. In thousands of homes afflicted with lead contamination in the United States, inhabitants suffer from decreased IQs, reductions in cognitive function, developmental delays, behavior modification, learning disabilities, seizures, comas, and even death. There are more than 500,000 children from one to five years old with blood lead levels above five micrograms per deciliter in the United States (U.S.), which can lead to lifelong cognitive damage. Children exposed to lead are seven times more likely to drop out of school, further putting their futures at risk. Furthermore, lead poisoning continues to disproportionately impact low-income areas and communities of color, contributing to racial, health and economic disparities across the country. The annual costs of lead poisoning to society are over \$50 billion. These costs are even more regrettable since lead poisoning is 100 percent preventable.

We urge you to provide at least \$120 million for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, including \$25 million for the Healthy Homes program, which addresses additional home health hazards in cost-effective ways. We also ask that you provide \$29 million to fully support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention program, and further ask you to return the name of that CDC program to "Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention".

Providing HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes with \$120 million in FY 2017 is critical to its continued success. The President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children reports that, "despite progress, lead poisoning remains one of the top childhood environmental health problems today." There are 23.2 million homes in the U.S. with peeling or chipping lead-based paint or high levels of lead in dust. Since 1993, this office has offered grants, performed research, enforced regulations, and reached out to communities, which have together contributed to a reduction in childhood lead poisoning cases by 70 percent. Furthermore, this office has successfully created 208,000 lead-safe units, ensured that over 186,000 additional units are lead-safe, and addressed health and safety conditions in over 20,000 substandard housing units. HUD estimates that the number of children under age five with blood lead levels above five micrograms per deciliter in 2010 would have included an additional 265,000 children if not for HUD's actions to control hazards in these housing units. In 2009, there was a return of \$17-\$221 per dollar invested in lead hazard control and a net savings of \$181-269 billion. Properly funding this program is a cost-effective way to keep children

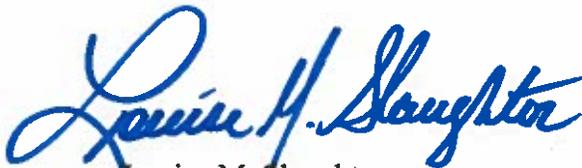
healthy, reduce unnecessary costs, and strengthen the economy.

In addition to HUD, the CDC plays a critical role in preventing lead poisoning as it is the only agency that keeps track of where, how, and when children are exposed to lead. Funding the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention program at \$29 million in FY 2017 will help provide surveillance information that is essential for health and housing agencies to best target funds and enforcement to the highest risk areas. Specifically, the CDC will be able to help 36 communities implement prevention strategies such as inspecting all units in multi-family housing when a child with a high blood lead level is identified in one unit; canvassing high risk neighborhoods to conduct lead inspections; partnering with local agencies to ensure compliance with lead-based paint requirements; and coordinating with home visiting programs to identify and refer high risk homes for support in obtaining lead-safe housing. The CDC's efforts prevent approximately 100,000 children from suffering from lead poisoning each year. Properly funding this program is essential to maintaining the progress made in preventing lead poisoning.

Furthermore, returning the name of this program to "Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention" will allow for a more holistic approach when conducting home assessments. Other hazards in the home, such as radon, carbon monoxide poisoning, and pests, can cause injury and disease. For example, there is a substantial body of evidence that shows houses with lead hazards are also very likely to have asthma triggers. Asthma has societal costs of \$56 billion annually, with over \$50 billion in direct medical costs. Allowing for home assessments to inspect, collect data, and perform interventions on a broad array of home health hazards in a single visit not only makes practical sense, but is also more cost efficient. Making this change would build on previous work done by this administration to protect the health of individuals exposed to lead and other hazards.

Thank you for your continued support of lead poisoning prevention and healthy housing. We greatly appreciate your leadership and appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress



David Cicilline  
Member of Congress