

March 25, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum, Chair
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
2256 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce, Ranking Member
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
1124 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall, Ranking Member
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Appropriation Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair McCollum, Chairwoman Murkowski, Ranking Member Joyce and Ranking Member Udall ;

We, the undersigned environmental and public health organizations, request an increase of \$12 million for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in the 2020 fiscal year Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. **ATSDR has not received an increase in its funding in over a decade.** ATSDR protects the public's health by preventing exposure to harmful contaminants in our soil, water, and air; ATSDR responds to requests from communities across the country to protect people from exposure to harmful levels of substances in the environment; ATSDR provides funds to state health departments and supports environmental health professionals in regional and field offices; and along with Atlanta-based headquarters staff, ATSDR experts are ready 24/7 to respond to environmental-health threats from natural disasters, chemical spills, and other emergencies.

An increase to ATSDR's budget would significantly enhance the agency's ability to respond to community requests for assistance, fund state and local health departments, and protect the nation's health. With continued flat 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. ATSDR's work on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) cannot be expanded to the many communities across the US concerned about exposure to PFAS in drinking water.

↗ Required to reduce funding to state grantees. Because ATSDR's funding is not keeping 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 (PCBs), 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 therefore the time to act is now. We call on 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,

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Public Health Association
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Children's Environmental Health Network
Climate for Health/ecoAmerica
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Service, Inc. (COA)
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Green & Healthy Homes Initiative
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Environmental Health Association
National Network of Public Health Institutes
Physicians for Social Responsibility, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
Public Health Institute
Trust for America's Health