

April 24, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health &
Human Services, Education &
Related Agencies Appropriations
Room 131 HSOB
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 Arlen Specter
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 Chairman Harkin, Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Specter and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

The undersigned organizations join in expressing our gratitude for the increased funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Environmental Health Laboratory and the National Environmental and Health Outcome Tracking Network (Tracking Network) included in the FY 2009 omnibus appropriations bill (Public Law No: 111-8). As you begin work of the FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we hope that you will build on this strong commitment to environmental health.

As you know, through the Environmental Health Laboratory's biomonitoring activities, we can measure with great precision actual levels of chemicals in people's bodies, determine which population groups are at high risk for exposure and adverse health effects, assess public health interventions, and monitor exposure trends over time. Over the years, biomonitoring data has helped protect health. Specifically, it forms the basis for the *National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals*, which provides an ongoing assessment of the U.S. population's exposure to environmental chemicals; has confirmed that restrictions on smoking in public places caused significant decreases in environmental tobacco exposure; and contributed to the science used to support the ban of three phthalates used in children's toys.

The \$8.9 million increase provided for the Environmental Health Laboratory in the FY 2009 omnibus will enable CDC to award funding to states to conduct their own biomonitoring activities, increase the number of biochemical indicators of diet and nutrition measured in the U.S. population, and support CDC's efforts to provide quality assurance, training and technical assistance to states. We applaud this progress as an important step in the right direction. To build upon this investment, in FY 2010, we urge the Committee to provide an additional \$19.6 million for CDC's Environmental Health Laboratory. Ten million dollars would be used

extramurally to support state public health laboratory biomonitoring capabilities. 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 Tracking Program. The program's objective is to track environmental hazards and the diseases with which they may be associated. A web-based network, set to launch early this Spring, will coordinate and integrate collection of critical health and environmental data in order to identify populations at risk, establish potential relationships between environmental hazards and disease, and guide intervention and prevention strategies.

Since 2002, Congress has provided funding for pilot programs, funding only 16 states and one city in FY 2008, down from 24 grantees. These grants have created the foundation for the national system, as the state and local data systems will feed into the Tracking Network. Funding provided in the FY 2009 omnibus will allow for the continued growth of a sustainable Tracking Network by supporting up to five new states for tracking and enabling CDC to increase funding to current grantees by approximately eight to ten percent. 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 Tracking Network in FY 2010 to expand it to additional states and support the continued development of a sustainable, nationwide 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. Toward that end, we respectfully request that you continue to increase investment in CDC's Environmental Health Laboratory and Tracking Program. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Better Children's Diets
American Public Health Association
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Breast Cancer Fund
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Children's Environmental Health Institute
Children's Environmental Health Network
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Epidemiology Program, Tennessee Department of Health
Environmental Public Health Division, Indiana State Department of Health
Florida Department of Health, Division of Environmental Health
Florida Public Health Association

Healthy Schools Network, Inc.
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Environmental Public Health Tracking
Program
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Environmental Health Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Office of Environmental Public Health, Public Health Division, Oregon Department of Human
Services
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Public Health Foundation
Trust for America's Health
Utah Department of Health