

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

We were proud to join with you during Children's Health Month in October to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Children's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research Centers. We were delighted to hear you express your commitment to these centers at their annual conference in Washington, DC, at the end of October.

These Centers are jointly funded by the U.S. EPA and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. They play a key role in providing the scientific basis for protecting children from environmental hazards. Even with their modest budgets, which have been unchanged for more than 10 years, the scientific output of these centers has been outstanding. It was these centers, for example, that found connections between prenatal exposures to both a common pesticide and a common air pollutant and lower IQ at age 7. Nowhere else is such valuable research in this field being generated.

As was featured at the Congressional briefing following the conference, profound and unexpected research findings are being generated by longitudinal cohort studies in New York City, the Salinas Valley, CA, Denver, CO, Baltimore, MD, the Yakima Valley, WA, and elsewhere.

One unique and valuable aspect of these centers are the cohorts -- groups of children who these centers have been following. Some of these cohorts have been following children's health and outcomes for more than a dozen years. The ability to look for linkages between prenatal exposures and health outcomes in infant, toddlers, and, now, adolescents, is vital. If these cohorts are disbanded due to funding cuts, at best it will be years and untold resources to replicate them. Few if any longitudinal cohort studies on adolescents, puberty and environmental exposures exist.

These centers are not only growing the field of children's environmental health scientists, by supporting students and faculty, but they are also job generators as well as supplying support to the families and communities involved in their research.

Thus, we are seeking your confirmation of your Agency's continued commitment to funding these centers without funding interruptions or crippling cutbacks. We know that the EPA is facing funding challenges and that many worthy programs and activities are at risk. Given the unique nature of these centers and the continuity that the existing cohorts provide, we urge you to ensure the centers are adequately funded to maintain the option of continuing the existing cohorts. To force existing centers to disband cohorts would be disastrous.

We all have the responsibility to provide healthy environments for all children. Meeting this responsibility includes support for the research necessary to understand how today's environments impact children's health and ability to learn.

On behalf of our children, we strongly urge the Agency's on-going commitment to these research centers and these cohorts. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Children's Environmental Health Network
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Autism Speaks
Breast Cancer Fund
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Learning Disabilities Association of America
The Myositis Association
Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR)

Cc:

Lek Kadeli, Acting Assistant Administrator, Office of Research and Development (via email)

Khesha Reed, Acting Director, Office of Children's Health Protection (via email)

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