

October 16, 2017

RE: Budget for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, and other members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations,

We write collectively as a group of scientists, clinicians, health professionals and children's advocates, to express our strong support for EPA standards and programs that:

1. Protect children's and pregnant women's health and
2. Enable the EPA to carry out its mandate to protect communities from pesticides and toxic chemicals using the most current science and scientific practices.

The health of the public, especially those who are most vulnerable, depends on the EPA having enough resources to carry out the research, programs and processes described in more detail below. We urge you to support a budget for EPA that maintains or increases funding for these critical areas. Funds directed to EPA are a wise investment of taxpayer dollars that provides returns many times over in the form of healthy children, pregnant women, families and communities—the human resources who form the critical foundation of a thriving and growing economy.

1. EPA programs help protect children's and pregnant women's health from toxic chemicals in the air, water, home and other environments.

We support maintaining or increasing the allocation of funds to EPA's Science To Achieve Results (STAR) programs for research on children's and pregnant women's health and effects of the environment. The STAR program engages some of the nation's best scientists, researchers, and engineers through grants and graduate fellowships for research complementing EPA's own intramural research program. This funding mechanism supports specialized research that is critical to inform science-based policy- and decision-making at the Agency that is not funded elsewhere.

We support maintaining or increasing the allocation of funds to programs to prevent lead poisoning and exposures to air pollutants and toxic chemicals in children and pregnant women and for environmental justice programs. As the ongoing Flint water crisis and recovery show, there is still a critical need to support these programs at the federal, state and local levels. Lead is a known neurotoxic chemical that has no safe exposure level, and yet children are still being exposed to this and many damaging chemicals around the nation. The Flint events also highlight that low-income and communities of color bear disproportionate burdens of toxic chemical exposures; thus, continued funding for environmental justice programs and federal oversight are also needed.

We support maintaining or increasing the allocation of funds for local and state programs to monitor and improve the quality of the environment, which are vital to ensure healthy communities. For example, state and local air quality management, water pollution control, public water system supervision, Superfund, and brownfields programs are just a few of the many programs that are essential to ensure that the environment is free of dangerous levels of substances that could threaten children's and pregnant women's health. These programs have a proven track record of carrying out the activities necessary to provide cleaner air, water and environments for families; we are very concerned

that reducing funding to these programs could reverse this progress and result in higher exposures to hazardous chemicals in the air, water, food, and household consumer products we encounter daily.

We support maintaining or increasing the allocation of funds for federal and state enforcement of statutes and regulations under EPA authority. Enforcement of environmental regulations is critical to protecting the health of pregnant women and children, and air and water quality from hazardous chemicals and pollutants. Enforcement ensures a level playing field, so corporations that violate the law do not gain an economic advantage over those corporations that act in accordance with regulations that protect public health and the environment.

We support funding to maintain or increase EPA's total budget. EPA's work under all of the major statutes has far-reaching impacts on children's and pregnant women's environmental health. EPA's workload is increasing, while its budgets have not kept pace. At minimum, EPA's 2016 appropriations levels for funding and for staff (full-time equivalent (FTE)) should be maintained.

2. EPA's research and the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) program are critical to evaluate pesticides and chemicals and protect the public from those that pose unreasonable risks.

We support funding to maintain or increase EPA's research budget. The EPA Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention is tasked with protecting Americans from risky pesticides, industrial, commercial and consumer product chemicals in their homes, workplaces and communities. Last year, Congress passed the Lautenberg Amendment reforms to the Toxic Substances Control Act, which EPA is now implementing. The Agency has enormous statutory obligations and responsibility to protect families from dangerous chemicals; EPA's total research budget should be realigned to reflect this.

We support fully funding the IRIS program. The IRIS program carries out independent assessments of chemicals, which are important resources for local, state and national authorities to use in decision making on hazardous chemicals, including informing regulations and clean-up standards. As reported by EPA's Scientific Advisory Board (September, 2017), the IRIS program incorporates a number of scientific best practices in their assessment process, including appropriate evaluation of study risk of bias (not numerical scoring of reporting quality); integrating primary toxicity information and health effects from animal and human studies, supported by mechanistic or other types of data; and using free and open source collaborative software to facilitate cross-Agency collaborations, communication, and public transparency.¹ Funding for the IRIS program is needed for EPA to move forward with chemical evaluations and make science-based decisions as required by law.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on appropriations for EPA. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions regarding these comments. The signers' institutional affiliations below are included for identification purposes only and do not necessarily imply any institutional endorsement or support, unless indicated otherwise.

¹ Memo from EPA Scientific Advisory Board to Administrator Pruitt, Sept 1, 2017. *Science Advisory Board comments on EPA's response to recommendations on the Integrated Risk Information System.*
[https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf/0/A9A9ACCE42B6AA0E8525818E004CC597/\\$File/EPA-SAB-17-008.pdf](https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf/0/A9A9ACCE42B6AA0E8525818E004CC597/$File/EPA-SAB-17-008.pdf)

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