

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2016

The Honorable Nicole Lurie, M.D.
Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Assistant Secretary Lurie:

We thank you for the work of the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and partnering agencies in coordinating additional funding and services to those affected by lead exposure from the drinking water in Flint, Michigan. We are concerned that – despite repeated encouragement – the State of Michigan is not requesting federal assistance as expeditiously as required to respond to the ongoing crisis in Flint. We therefore urge HHS and the partnering agencies to examine their flexibility in directing funds to Flint absent official requests from the State of Michigan. When that flexibility does not exist, we ask that the agency provide guidance and technical assistance to ensure federal assistance provided to the State of Michigan reaches Flint. In addition, the agency should send to the Governor a list of programs that would assist Flint in their efforts to address the disaster, but cannot be accessed without the Governor’s approval.

During this water crisis, the State failed repeatedly to request help from the Federal government, even turning down an offer of assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to determine the cause of the Legionnaires’ disease outbreak in early 2015. This refusal of assistance resulted in preventable harm to the people of Flint. Subsequently, during the summer of 2015 there was another outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease that caused the deaths of nine people¹. More recently, although the Governor announced on January 26, 2016 that he would be requesting a Medicaid expansion, he did not send in the formal request until February 15, 2016 – over four months after learning of the dangerous lead levels in the water². The people of Flint cannot continue to endure these types of delays.

Direct funding, when possible, along with clear guidance and quality technical assistance issued by federal agencies supporting Flint, will prevent delays in providing future support and increase the efficiency of service delivery to the citizens suffering from lead-contaminated drinking water. We request that you immediately direct all agencies and offices working under your authority as the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response to determine if funds can be directed to Flint without state approval and to provide guidance and technical assistance to ensure all available federal assistance provided to the State of Michigan reaches lead-exposed localities. Should a program require state approval, the agency should send a list of those programs to the Governor notifying the need for the Governor’s approval.

¹ <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/michigan/flint-water-crisis/2016/02/15/federal-agencies-quickly-legionnaires-disease-outbreak-flint-water/80385658/>

² <http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/flint-water-crisis/2016/01/26/snyder-seek-aid-flint-children-exposed-lead/79365334/>

The Honorable Nicole Lurie

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Page 2

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce



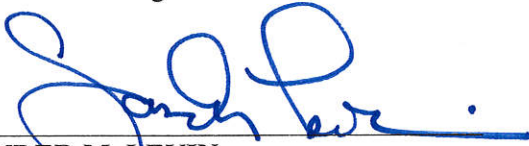
DANIEL T. KILDEE
Member of Congress



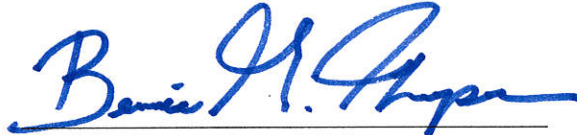
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Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means



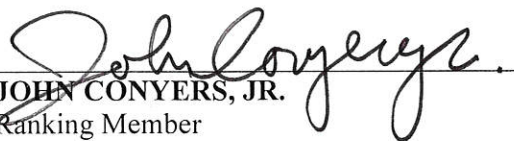
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Committee on Financial Services



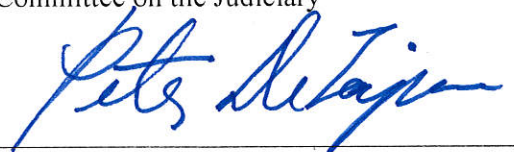
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Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

cc:

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Environmental Protection Agency
Small Business Administration
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of Education
Department of Agriculture