

Lawmakers led letter to CDC this week in opposition to cuts to childhood lead prevention program

WASHINGTON – Today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) adopted the recommendations of its Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention for a more protective threshold for determining lead poisoning in America's children, garnering praise from Congressmembers Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.), Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.).

Earlier this week Slaughter led a letter with Reps. Markey, Waxman and 24 Democratic House members urging the adoption of these new levels to ensure the additional 200,000 children who would become eligible for intervention are protected from the devastating effects of the toxic chemical. Unfortunately, language from House Republicans included in the federal budget for fiscal year 2012 means the CDC Lead Prevention/Healthy Homes Program has been cut by more than 90 percent – from \$29 million in fiscal year 2011 to \$2 million. States have been informed that, after September 1, 2012, the CDC will no longer be able to fund the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. The CDC also is in the process of reducing staffing for the program from 26 to six full time employees.

"I'm pleased to see that the CDC has drawn the same conclusions on the measures necessary to prevent lead poisoning among our children," said Slaughter, who authored the Lead Poisoning Reduction Act in 2006 and 2007. "However I am deeply concerned that the CDC will lack the necessary resources it needs to implement the plan. You can't put a price on the health of our children. Lead poisoning is a preventable condition - we must not allow these short-sighted budget cuts to get in the way of protecting our children."

"I commend the CDC for allowing science not politics to drive their adoption of these new limits that will help protect our children from lead poisoning," said Rep. Markey, senior member of the Energy and Commerce Committee. "It is unfortunate that Republican budget cuts have tied CDC's hands in fully implementing many these recommendations. We know there is no safe blood lead level in children, and the lower reference dose to initiate actions and follow-up evaluation will go a long way to protect American children. I will continue to work to ensure that the CDC and other relevant agencies receive the resources needed to implement all recommendations that would protect children from this and other hazardous chemicals."

"A growing body of scientific evidence has found significant harm to children exposed to small amounts of lead, including irreversible learning disabilities and behavioral problems, said Rep. Waxman, Ranking Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee. "Since no safe level of lead exposure has been identified, I am pleased that CDC has taken this important step forward which will better protect our children by working to eliminate these exposures in the first place. Now, we must also take the necessary steps to ensure CDC has the resources to carry out its lead poisoning prevention efforts."

Lead exposure is especially risky for children six years of age and younger, affecting the nervous system and causing behavioral problems and learning disabilities, seizures and even death. Recent research also has found that lead exposure can impact adults' memory and hearing and vision as well as the health safety of pregnant women and their offspring. The threshold for determining lead poisoning recommended by the CDC Advisory Council is essentially the level at which protective actions would be triggered by doctors, health departments and parents for exposed children.

[The text of the letter to the CDC can be found here.](#)

PUBLISHED MAY 16, 2012