March 2021

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Chair, Interior-Env. Subcm.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2022 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill, the undersigned members of the Friends of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) would like to call your attention to the vital work being carried out by the NIH/NIEHS as a result of the annual appropriation provided for this work in the Subcommittee’s bill. We ask you to provide $89 million for the Superfund Research program in FY2022.

Within the Interior-Environment Appropriations bill, the NIEHS’s Superfund Program (SRP) supports research to address the health impacts from hazardous substances in the environment, including how environmental toxins may impact susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19, develop clean-up technologies for hazardous waste, and train the future generation of scientists to work in interdisciplinary research teams to tackle such problems. The NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP) uses the best available science to help inform materials and curriculum to train hazardous waste workers, to accelerate remediation efforts, and to prevent health consequences related to toxicant exposure. These programs have provided the safety tools and training to transform contaminated sites into new opportunities for residential, industrial, and commercial ventures – which means new jobs for the surrounding community and new sources of revenue for state and local governments.

The NIEHS continues to support important COVID-19 related research and training that is informing our response to the pandemic. In March 2020, the NIEHS WTP made available their COVID-19 Response Training Tool, which was cleared by the White House Coronavirus Taskforce. Through supplemental projects and COVID-19 supplemental funding added to annual grants, WTP grantees are providing training to essential and returning worker populations across
the U.S. and its territories. Furthermore, several WTP Small Business Innovation Research Project grants are developing pioneering technologies that include delivery of COVID-19 skills development and health and safety knowledge on virtual platforms.

The SRP is currently conducting the research related to SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19. Examples include:

- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) SRP Center is developing a geographic information systems approach to spatially evaluate the association between exposure to arsenic, social stressors, and COVID-19 in North Carolina.
- University of California (UC), San Diego SRP Center, researchers are leveraging their work to identify molecular targets for reducing an inflammatory immune response to explore new treatment options to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with COVID-19. Center researchers are also implementing a widespread COVID-19 testing program in San Ysidro, California, located on the U.S.-Mexico border.
- The North Carolina State University SRP Center expanded research to assess how exposure to chemicals such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) may affect health outcomes related to COVID-19 and to determine how PFAS exposure alters COVID-19 symptoms and susceptibility.

The SRP’s research portfolio includes research across many other health areas, including the following:

- **Pregnancy Complications** - Researchers at the University of Michigan revealed how exposure to Trichloroethylene (TCE), a widely used industrial chemical frequently found at Superfund sites as a contaminant in soil and groundwater, may have a negative impact on placental growth during pregnancy, which may affect the growth and wellbeing of the baby.
- **Hurricanes** - Researchers at Texas A&M University Superfund Research Program Center are developing methods and tools to predict exposure during environmental emergencies, such as the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey and Florence and to produce applied solutions to mitigate negative effects of environmental disasters on human health. Researchers from Northeastern University are providing water infiltration kits and other support to its study participants in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The researchers are investigating links between the high preterm birth rate of 11.8% on the island, and the extent of hazardous waste contamination there.
- **Addressing PFAS contamination** – Researchers at Brown University, Harvard, and Texas A&M SRP Centers and other SRP-sponsored SBIR projects are heavily engaged in addressing legacy and emerging PFAS contamination, providing urgently needed scientific information on exposure sources, toxicity, and clean-up methods to inform policy, and aiding states and impacted communities.

We ask for your leadership in ensuring that the NIH/NIEHS Superfund-related activities receive an increase of $7.5 million in the Fiscal Year 2022 bill to a total of $89 million, which will help to keep our air, soil, and water safe. If the opportunity to meet the current investment needs of the NIEHS Superfund Research Program and Worker Training Program is passed by, we risk reversing a variety of public health, environmental, and economic gains of the past 25 years.
Sincerely,

AIHA
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Autoimmune-Related Disease Association
American Geophysical Union
American Thoracic Society
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Birth Defect Research for Children
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
Children's Environmental Health Network
Endocrine Society
Environmental Working Group
Green Science Policy Institute
Healthy Schools Network
Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition, Inc.
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Lupus Foundation of America
National Center for Environmental Health Strategies
National Environmental Health Association
Society for Occupational and Environmental Health
Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention
Society of Toxicology
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research
The Myositis Association
West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT)