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The Honorable Chuck Schumer
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The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
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May 14, 2021

INFRASTRUCTURE SHOULD INCLUDE LEAD PAINT AND HEALTHY HOMES

We support the Biden Administration's proposal to include resilient, upgraded, and affordable housing as part of the infrastructure plan, and we urge Congress to include \$19 billion to replace 25 million old, leaky, energy-wasting, lead-contaminated windows and address other healthy housing hazards in its final bill. We represent parents, environmental justice, housing, health, environmental, energy, and educational professionals and citizens from all walks of life.

This investment will protect children, make homes more resilient and affordable, improve health and safety, reduce inequities, promote environmental justice, create thousands of construction and manufacturing jobs, provide a positive return on investment, and provide many other social and financial benefits. It will help overcome the legacy of disinvestment in low-income communities of color that were redlined. Sixty percent of Black Americans live in historically redlined communities, the same communities that also have higher risks of lead poisoning.

Childhood lead poisoning, asthma, and preventable home injuries are among the nation's most important environmental justice, public health, and housing problems. Children of color and those from low-income communities are at much greater risk of lead poisoning and other housing-related diseases and injuries, and poor housing quality is a major contributor to health disparities. More than 35 million homes have one or more lead paint or other health or safety hazards, which have resulted in generations of Americans who have been harmed needlessly.

These problems are all preventable. Addressing them at scale improves household budgets and saves billions in avoidable health care, special education, and housing management expenses.

The pandemic has made the need for healthy homes clearer than ever. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 34% fewer children had their blood tested for lead over the past year, as children have had to spend more time in homes that all too often have lead paint and other health hazards. Recent extreme weather events like wildfires, extreme cold and heat, flooding, and hurricanes have also reinforced the need for homes that are healthy, safe, resilient, energy efficient, and affordable. Americans should not have to face such huge disparities in healthy homes.

We support the call to include provisions in the infrastructure plan for affordable, energy-efficient, and resilient housing. Our homes should also protect and support the health of residents, especially children. Homes are at the center of our lives under normal circumstances and are even more important during emergencies. The healthfulness of our homes improves our ability to face future pandemics and a changing climate.

We believe that everyone truly deserves to be “safer at home.”

Congress should include at least \$19 billion for replacement of old, energy-inefficient, lead-contaminated windows and correction of other housing hazards that affect health and safety. The Biden Administration’s infrastructure proposal currently allocates about \$213 billion for other much-needed housing initiatives, because housing is a key part of the nation’s infrastructure. Separately, the plan allocates funding to replace leaded drinking water pipes, a significant source of lead exposure that should be funded fully, as well as other much-needed housing weatherization improvement.

Far too many of the nation’s cases of childhood lead poisoning are from lead paint and the contaminated dust and soil it generates. The highest levels of lead paint and dust are on old, energy-inefficient, leaky windows that can also create mold, asthma, and injury hazards. Existing housing, lead poisoning prevention, and weatherization programs all struggle to replace those windows, but the right investment can achieve multiple aims consistent with the administration’s priorities of addressing climate change, environmental justice, overcoming past inequities, and creating jobs.

Replacing old windows with new energy-efficient ones will:

- Eliminate a major source of childhood lead poisoning,
- Decrease home utility bills,
- Reduce carbon emissions by improving home energy efficiency,
- Provide thousands of jobs for both window manufacturers and window installers, and
- Improve home value.

A \$19 billion investment in old window replacement and healthy homes will replace 25 million lead-painted windows and allow communities to correct other serious housing health and safety hazards, such as remediation of asthma risks, radon, injury hazards, and more. A \$55.8 billion investment over the next 10 years is needed to replace all lead-contaminated windows in housing built before 1960 with safer, more energy-efficient windows.

This initial \$19 billion down payment toward achieving that goal would protect hundreds of thousands of children each year and generate at least \$26.4 billion in benefits related to lead poisoning prevention alone. Other co-benefits will yield billions more and address many other existing housing-related health disparities.

Addressing lead paint and healthy homes as part of a strategy to provide upgraded, resilient, more equitable, and affordable housing in the infrastructure plan promises a transformational change. As the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Secretary Marcia Fudge noted, “This once-in-a-generation investment speaks to what I and so many others know to be true: housing is infrastructure.”

Our nation’s homes cannot truly be resilient or affordable without also being healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

National Center for Healthy Housing

National Organizations

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists
American Public Health Association
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Black Millennials for Flint
Building Performance Association
Building Performance Institute
ChangeLab Solutions
Children's Environmental Health Network
Common Threads
Earthjustice
Enterprise Community Partners
Environmental Defense Fund
First Focus Campaign for Children
Habitat for Humanity International
Healthy Babies Bright Futures
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
National Center for Environmental Health Strategies
National Community Development Association
National Community Stabilization Trust
National Environmental Health Association
National Housing Trust
National NeighborWorks Association
RESULTS
The Learning Agency Lab
Trust for America's Health
Union of Concerned Scientists
Collaborating Center for Research and Training on Housing Related Disease and Injury Prevention, a
WHO Collaborating Center

State and Local Organizations

AFGE Local 704
Amy Murphy Consulting
Barr & Clark, Inc.
Childhood Lead Action Project
City of Toledo, Department of Neighborhoods
Detroit Lead Partnership
EHS Laboratories

Elevate
 EnviroPlan, LLC
 ERC Lead
 Gary E. Hanes & Associates, LLC
 Great Lakes Center for Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health, a WHO Collaborating Center
 Habitat for Humanity of Rhode Island-Greater Providence
 Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan
 KeyUrban
 Lead-Free Mohawk Valley
 Legal Services of Central New York
 LEW Corporation
 Lincoln Westmoreland Housing, Inc.
 Louisville Metro Department Public Health and Wellness
 Metropolitan Tenants Organization
 Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health
 Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
 Michigan's Children
 Minnick's, Inc.
 Mohawk Valley CAA
 New Ecology, Inc
 Northern Manhattan Improvement Corp
 Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition
 Parents for Healthy Homes
 Partnership Effort for the Advancement of Children's Health (PEACH)
 Public Health and Safety, Inc.
 QA Lead Environmental, Inc.
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