

April 14, 2024

The Honorable Mike Simpson, Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chellie Pingree, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley, Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs Simpson and Merkley and Ranking Members Pingree and Murkowski:

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) represents more than 7,000 governmental, private, academic, and uniformed services sector environmental health professionals in the U.S., its territories, and internationally. NEHA is the profession's strongest advocate for excellence in the practice of environmental health as it delivers on its mission to build, sustain, and empower an effective environmental health workforce.

NEHA requests that Congress provide at least \$100 million for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in the FY 2025 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. We are disappointed with the more than \$3 million cut to ATSDR's budget in the final FY 2024 Interior-Environment appropriations bill and we urge the committee to restore this cut and further boost the agency's funding in FY 2025.

ATSDR establishes and maintains effective relationships with people in communities that are impacted by environmental hazards throughout the nation. The agency assists these communities by investigating and addressing the health concerns resulting from environmental hazards. ATSDR's environmental health expertise, regional locations, and ability to respond 24/7 enables the agency to respond to and address environmental health threats from chemical spills and other emergencies at a moment's notice.

ATSDR has completed the initial Assessment of Chemical Exposure (ACE) investigation in the train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. Over 700 residents and 330 first responders participated in the ACE survey. The results of the ACE investigation are currently being used to inform the next steps of the response, and the agency remains engaged with the state health departments

and other partners to continue addressing the impacts. In late 2021, ATSDR began providing support to the Hawaii Department of Health for the fuel releases in the U.S. Navy's Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam drinking water system. The agency is currently conducting a public health assessment to understand the health effects of the releases at Red Hill at the request of the Hawaii Department of Health. The assessment will build on previous ATSDR health investigations: the Pearl Harbor Naval Complex public health assessment (completed in 2005) and the three ACE investigations conducted since the 2021 fuel release.

In FY23, ATSDR responded to over 720 community, state, and federal requests for assistance. Over the last two years, ATSDR has also conducted more than 60 assessments in communities across the country and evaluated the health risks of over 600,000 people. The agency also educated over 30,000 health professionals on ways to diagnose and treat conditions related to hazardous exposures. ATSDR published the final report for the PFAS exposure assessments in September 2022. The exposure assessments found that the average blood levels for PFAS were higher than national levels in most of the studied communities. The assessments also provided information about factors that affect exposure that can be used to prevent and reduce future exposures. The exposure assessments have included over 2,300 participants, assessed over 1,300 households and reached over 150,000 people through social media.

ATSDR also provides vital support to advance children's environmental health. The agency provides environmental health education to public health professionals, clinicians, community members and others. ATSDR also supports ten Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units that advise parents and pediatric health providers on protecting and caring for children potentially exposed to harmful chemicals. In addition to the thousands of trainings conducted, PEHSUs have provided over 1,000 consultations benefitting nearly 2,500 health professionals, parents, and community members. PEHSUs provide a vital role because most healthcare professionals do not receive proper training to recognize, manage, treat, and prevent environmentally related conditions in children.

In order for ATSDR to continue to build upon its impactful work protecting the public from environmental hazards, we urge you to support a request of at least \$100 million for the agency in FY 2025. This would significantly enhance the agency's ability to respond to emergencies, community requests for assistance, fund state and local health departments and protect the nation's health.



If you have any questions, please contact our Director of Government Affairs Doug Farquhar at dfarquhar@neha.org.

In health,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Butts". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Thomas Butts, MSC, REHS
NEHA President
tbutts@neha.org

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David T. Dyjack". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

David T. Dyjack, DrPH, CIH
NEHA Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
ddyjack@neha.org

