

April 19, 2024

Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair, House Appropriations
Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC

Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC

Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC

Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC

Dear Chairs Aderholt and Baldwin and Ranking Members DeLauro and Capito;

As Congress moves forward with the fiscal year (FY) 2025 appropriations process, our association would like to emphasize the critical importance of efforts performed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) that enable state and local environmental health agencies to provide a safe, healthful environment for your constituents.

State, local, tribal and territorial environmental health agencies perform the services necessary for every community to provide a safe, healthful environment. These agencies ensure that our food is safe, that our water is drinkable, that the air is breathable, and that wastewater is eliminated. These agencies provide the fundamental services required for robust and sanitary communities that are attractive for businesses and residents.

The federal government does not fund these services; they are supported by service fees and state and local taxes. What the federal government does fund, mainly through CDC's NCEH, is research and guidance to allow the state and local environmental health agencies to combat emerging threats.

Such environmental health threats include:

- Health impacts caused by climate: The climate is affecting every aspect of our environment, including health. Extreme weather events, wildfire smoke, and flooding

cause adverse health effects, from respiratory ailments to vectorborne disease. Guidance from NCEH is critical. Recent studies by the NCEH include:

- Impacts of wildfire smoke on rural and semi-rural communities: This research demonstrated how such smoke affects health and approaches to mitigate these impacts.
- Extreme weather events: NCEH studied the aftereffects of hurricanes, tornadoes, and droughts on health. Their research gave state and local agencies direction on approaches to limit the adverse health impacts from these events.
- Heat events: The number of heat-related deaths in the U.S. is rising. NCEH collects county-level information on the expected number of days at or above a dangerous heat level for public health, which helps health departments take appropriate actions. During these heat waves, this information provides critical awareness and aids communities most impacted by extreme heat.
- Children's environmental health: Children are perhaps the most vulnerable of all populations. They take in most air, eat more for their size, and absorb more of their environments than adults. Changes in their environment cause adverse health effects that last their entire lives. The federal government through NCEH and other agencies provide the insight necessary for state and local agencies to respond to environmental health threats to children.
- Private drinking water: Up to 23 million households are served by private drinking water systems, which are not regulated by the federal government. Many of these systems, however, are overseen by state and local environmental health agencies. Research conducted by NCEH identifies recent waterborne disease threats, providing these agencies with the necessary information on how private water users can reduce threats from these diseases.
- Asthma and air quality: Approximately 25 million people in the U.S. have asthma, including more than four million children. Asthma takes almost 4,000 lives and causes 1.6 million emergency department visits per year. CDC's National Asthma Control Program recipients work in communities with lower incomes, among populations without access to services, and in areas disproportionately impacted by negative environmental effects (e.g., communities affected by transportation or industrial air pollution) and other outdoor air quality concerns to help address health disparities at the local level.

CDC's NCEH addresses emerging environmental health risks and responds to environmental health emergencies by developing tools, guidance, and trainings; disseminating best practices; and providing expertise and requested technical assistance on environmental health concerns. CDC provides expertise and guidance relied on by other federal, state, tribal, local, and territorial partners, including extreme heat, wildfires and hurricanes; cancer cluster investigations; chemical exposures related to the train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio; potential chemical, radiological, nuclear, or explosive mass casualty events; and safe drinking and recreation waters that are free from contaminants that can cause waterborne illness.



NCEH performed all these services for \$229 million in FY 2024. For FY 2025, NCEH is requesting \$249 million, of which \$17 million comes from the Public Health Trust Fund.

On behalf of NEHA and state, local, tribal, and territorial environmental health agencies in general, please support this modest request to ensure communities in this country remain safe from environmental health threats.

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

In health,



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