

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 31, 2018

Patrick Breyse, PhD, CIH
Director, National Center for Environmental Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
395 E St SW Ste 9100
Washington, DC 20473

Secretary Linda Seemeyer
Department of Health Services
1 W. Wilson Street, Room 650
P.O. Box 7850
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Dr. Breyse and Ms. Seemeyer,

I write today to express my concern about recent reports indicating that the Milwaukee Health Department failed to notify and neglected to follow up with thousands of families whose children were found to have elevated levels of lead in their blood.

Under Wisconsin's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, which also receives funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 25,000 children in the City of Milwaukee are tested for lead poisoning each year. On average, approximately 3,000 are found to have elevated levels of lead in their blood every year and the number of children in Milwaukee poisoned by lead is on the rise. Wisconsin's Blood Lead Screening Recommendations include universal testing of all children living in Milwaukee and Racine, and state law requires that medical professionals who diagnose lead poisoning or lead exposure report results to the Department of Health Services (DHS). Importantly, Wisconsin law also requires local health departments to provide follow up services and conduct environmental investigation activities when children under the age of six are found to have elevated blood lead levels to determine if the family residence presents a lead hazard.

In January, the Milwaukee Health Department Commissioner resigned after reports indicated that the Department failed to appropriately follow up and provide services to families of children who tested positive for elevated levels of lead in their blood. A recent report released by the Department found that thousands of families whose children had tested positive for lead poisoning did not receive letters from the city, including referrals for intervention services, and that the Department failed to conduct the necessary follow-up testing of family residences.

Lead poisoning is a serious environmental threat to our families and children, and our response requires the collaboration of public health systems at the local, state, and federal level. As such, I ask that the Wisconsin DHS conduct an investigation into the Milwaukee Health Department's compliance with state law concerning childhood lead screening, notification and follow up activities. Furthermore, I request that the CDC evaluate Wisconsin's oversight and implementation of lead prevention activities funded under its CDC Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program grant. I also ask that CDC describe the process for ensuring that grantees abide by the program standards.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator