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September 26, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Reid, and
Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 66,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I am writing to you regarding funding for two critical public health crises facing our nation's children: the Zika epidemic, and the widespread lead exposure of the children of Flint, Michigan through contaminated drinking water.

As of September 15th, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is tracking 749 cases of pregnant women infected with Zika in the continental United States and 1,348 cases in Puerto Rico and other territories. As you know, twenty babies in the U.S. have been born with microcephaly and, tragically, one of those infants has died. Our nation has never before faced a situation where a single mosquito bite could result in dreadful, permanent, life-altering birth defects. The urgent need for aid to prevent Zika is clear. The AAP appreciates that an agreement was reached to approve much-needed funding for CDC, the National Institutes of Health, the United States Agency for International Development, and other federal agencies to respond to the Zika virus through education, health services, vector control, and research for vaccine and diagnostic test development.

As you negotiate a final package to fund the government for the next few months, however, **the AAP strongly urges you to also include in that package funds to aid the city of Flint as it grapples with the long-term effects of lead exposure of 9,000 of its children.** Lead is a potent neurotoxin. There is no safe level of lead exposure for children. Lead damage can be permanent and irreversible. Children with elevated lead levels are more likely to have behavior problems, attention deficit and reading disabilities, and fail to graduate from high school.

Although lead is a risk factor for developmental and behavioral problems, its impact varies significantly by individual and may be affected by the psychosocial environment and educational experiences of the developing child. Given the disproportionate risk for low-income children and families, the impact of lead exposure in communities like Flint can be enormous.

Congress must not delay any longer in providing direct aid to Flint; the delay in the provision of this federal aid means that the children of Flint are losing precious time that could be used to make sure that critical interventions are supplied to provide them with the brightest future possible.

Thank you again for including funds for a federal response to the Zika virus in the Continuing Resolution. We strongly urge you to include vital funding to help the children of Flint as well. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Ami Gadhia in our Washington, D.C. office at 202/347-8600 or agadhia@aap.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benard P. Dreyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a distinct "D" at the end.

Benard P. Dreyer, MD, FAAP
President
BPD/avg