

September 26, 2016

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

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

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

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:

Clean drinking water is a basic human right that most people in American take for granted. Not so the residents of Flint, MI. They pay amongst the highest rates in the world, for water that is not currently suitable for drinking, and their vital water infrastructure has been damaged to a point where they literally cannot afford to restore it without outside help.

When natural disaster or acts of terrorism strike, our nation mobilizes and acts swiftly to help those in need. Yet, for the man-made disaster in Flint, attributable to failure of government at all levels—congressional action has not been forthcoming to restore civilization as we know it, in the form of clean potable water and reliable water infrastructure. Without such action, the impacts of this disaster will linger for decades, if not generations—and some of America’s most vulnerable children will suffer the permanent consequences.

The Flint Water Crisis has wrought much - widespread lead contamination, one of the worst Legionnaires outbreaks in U.S. history, skin irritation, and a loss of faith in government entrusted to protect the public welfare. Unfortunately, there is no medical treatment for lead exposure nor can we restore lives lost to Legionnaires disease. But there are important steps we can take, to give Flint residents a chance for a better future.

First, it is imperative that Flint’s children receive significant and long-term health, nutrition, and educational support to mitigate the impact of lead exposure to the extent that is possible. We are learning what the impact of the Flint Water Crisis will have on families and children, but we hope to learn more from our recovery and share these best practices with other struggling communities.

Second, we need to restore Flint’s damaged water infrastructure. Currently, only a fraction of the lead pipes have been replaced. Water main breaks are an almost daily occurrence, causing flooding, property damage, and expensive emergency repairs. To restore public confidence and water safety, we must make a significant investment in Flints water infrastructure, and in that of other cities in need.

We were two actors amongst many, who took seriously the cries of Flint residents, and ultimately helped reveal the scope of the Flint disaster. What is done cannot be undone, but we should take steps to mitigate future harm to the extent that is possible – we ask you approve legislation to assist Flint families.

Sincerely,



Marc Edwards, PhD
edwardsm@vt.edu



Mona Hanna-Attisha, MD MPH
mhanna1@hurleymc.com