

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 26, 2018

The Honorable Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., M.D.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Carson:

We urge the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to quickly implement recommendations outlined in the recently released Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, “Lead Paint in Housing: HUD Should Strengthen Grant Processes, Compliance Monitoring, and Performance Assessment,” to ensure that families and children living in federally assisted housing are protected from the devastating consequences of lead poisoning. We believe addressing the concerns outlined in the GAO report is crucial to fulfilling HUD’s role to provide access to safe, decent, and affordable housing.

Lead hazards in a home pose serious health and safety threats to children. Lead poisoning causes significant health, neurological, behavioral, intellectual, and academic impairments. When absorbed into the body, especially in young children, lead can damage the brain and nervous system, slow development and growth, and cause learning or behavioral problems. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), lead-based paint hazards, such as dust containing lead and chips from deteriorated lead-based paint, are the most common source of lead exposure for U.S. children. A 2011 HUD survey found that lead-based paint is in roughly 37 million U.S. homes, of which 93 percent were built before 1978—the year lead-based paint use in housing was banned in the United States.

HUD has the responsibility to provide Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) with resources to address lead-based paint hazards, including providing guidelines and awarding grants to help identify and remediate lead-based paint in federally assisted housing. The GAO report concluded that “opportunities exist for improvement” in HUD’s oversight, inspection, performance assessment, and reporting of its lead hazard grant and rental assistance programs. The report found that HUD can improve its implementation of lead paint hazards programs in the following ways: better documenting and evaluating to ensure that residents of PHAs that are most at-risk of lead are receiving the targeted resources they need; ensuring compliance by PHAs of existing lead paint hazard regulations; and implementing a comprehensive performance assessment, reporting, and communication strategy for PHAs to ensure that they are complying with existing lead paint mitigation procedures and controls.

While we appreciate HUD’s recent efforts to adopt a lower blood lead level threshold equivalent to the CDC’s standard for lead exposure in children that requires action, the GAO report makes clear that HUD should improve virtually all of its protocols for identifying and remediating the presence of lead-based paint hazards in federally-assisted housing.

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Given the overwhelming evidence of the dire long-term health and financial costs associated with lead poisoning, we urge HUD to take immediate action to implement the recommendations outlined in the GAO report and to provide us with an update no later than December 14, 2018. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



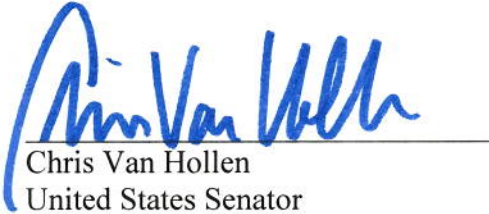
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