

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 11, 2023

Dr. Aaron Bernstein
Director
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
4770 Buford Hwy, NE (MS F59)
Atlanta, GA 30341-3717

Dear Director Bernstein:

We write to request that the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) conduct a public health assessment on the impact of decades of flooding in Cahokia Heights, Illinois.

For years, residents in Cahokia Heights have struggled with flash flooding, raw sewage in yards and homes, and potentially dangerous drinking water—the result of large-scale infrastructure problems that have failed to protect residents' homes. As you are aware, prolonged exposure to floodwater and sewage can pose a significant public health threat from exposure to mold and other bacteria linked to infections and cancers.

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has been engaged and monitoring certain data sources to examine this issue. However, we believe the public health threat posed by flooding in Cahokia Heights requires a whole-of-government approach that can complement IDPH's efforts to address this unique challenge.

Preliminary findings from a study conducted by Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Colorado reportedly found that more than 40 percent of adults in Cahokia Heights who were tested last year were infected with *Helicobacter pylori*, which can cause ulcers or increase the risk of gastric cancer. Additionally, residents of Cahokia Heights have reported respiratory and cardiovascular problems that could be connected to floodwater and sewage.

Therefore, we are requesting ATSDR provide vital federal assistance to Cahokia Heights by conducting a comprehensive public health assessment and more fully informing residents about any possible risks to their health. Further, we urge ATSDR to consider holding a community forum to discuss the flooding in Cahokia Heights and its public health impacts to help ensure a transparent and robust study.

With ATSDR's leadership, and in partnership with state and local public health officials, we can reassure families in Cahokia Heights that their government always will prioritize public health. Thank you for your time and attention to this request.

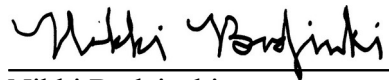
Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress