

November 19, 2020

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chair, Interior-Env. Subcm.  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall  
Rank. Mem, Interior-Env. Subcm.  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chair, Interior-Env. Subcm.  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce  
Rank. Mem, Interior-Env. Subcm.  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Murkowski and McCollum and Ranking Members Udall and Joyce:

Thank you for your leadership on appropriations and for your ongoing commitment to investing in environmental protection. As you prepare the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies (Interior-Env) spending measure, [the Friends of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences \(NIEHS\) urge you to provide \\$83 million for the NIEHS's Superfund-Related Activities, consistent with the House-passed FY 2021 Interior-Env Appropriations Bill.](#)

Within the Interior-Env appropriations bill, the NIEHS's Superfund Research Programs (SRP) supports research to address the health impacts from hazardous substances in the environment, develop clean-up technologies for hazardous waste, advance new risk assessment methods, and train the future generation of scientists to work in interdisciplinary research teams to tackle such problems. The NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP) uses the best available science to help inform materials and curriculum to train hazardous waste workers, to accelerate remediation efforts, and to prevent health consequences related to toxicant exposure. These programs have provided the safety tools and training to transform contaminated sites into new opportunities for residential, industrial, and commercial ventures – which means new jobs for the surrounding community and new sources of revenue for state and local governments.

Via Superfund-related activities, the NIEHS continues to support important COVID-19 related research and training that is informing our response to the pandemic. In March 2020, the NIEHS WTP made available their COVID-19 [Response Training Tool](#), which was cleared by the White House Coronavirus Taskforce. Through supplemental projects and COVID-19 supplemental funding added to annual grants, WTP grantees are providing training to essential and returning worker populations across the U.S. and its territories. Furthermore, several WTP Small Business Innovation Research Project grants are developing pioneering technologies that include delivery of COVID-19 skills development and health and safety knowledge on virtual platforms. And in June 2020, SRP-funded researchers launched the [COVID-19 Pandemic Vulnerability Index](#) (PVI), an online tool reporting pandemic vulnerability risk profiles for every U.S. county. The COVID-19 PVI can be used to identify SARS-CoV2 and COVID-19 hotspots and help inform policymakers when interventions should be considered.

The SRP's research portfolio spans myriad research areas, such as furthering research on the effects of soil and groundwater contaminants on fetal development, developing of innovative technologies to detect and remove environmental contaminants including lead and arsenic from drinking water, and advancing our understanding on the health effects and developing applied solutions to mitigate the effects of natural disasters (including hurricanes) on human health. We ask for your leadership in ensuring that the NIH/NIEHS Superfund-Related Activities receive \$83 million in any final Interior-Env spending measure to accelerate important research discoveries to protect public health and facilitate healthy and safety training for American workers.

Sincerely,



Nuala S. Moore  
Co-chair  
Friends of NIEHS



Joseph Laakso, Ph.D.  
Co-chair  
Friends of NIEHS