

**Remarks for the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Appropriations Subcommittee Member Day**

**Congressman Peter J. Visclosky (IN-01)**

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I would like to thank Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member Tom Cole, and all of the members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies for holding today's hearing and providing this opportunity for myself and all members to speak about our funding priorities in Fiscal Year 2020.

While I am submitting a number of funding requests to the Subcommittee for the upcoming fiscal year, my reason for testifying today is to discuss the importance of agencies and programs that ensure the good health, well-being, and safety of all Americans, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. This program currently supports efforts in the State of Indiana, and a number of other states and localities, that make sure that children exposed to lead can receive blood screenings and be connected with treatment services as necessary. While these efforts are commonly associated with the need to address lead in household paint products, they are also vitally important in communities with an industrial legacy, such as East Chicago, Indiana, which is a city in my district that contains a Superfund site contaminated with lead and arsenic in the soil.

No resident of my district, or any other area, should have to suffer from the harsh effects of lead exposure, particularly children. However, according to the CDC, at least 535,000 children across the United States are currently affected by lead poisoning, which can result in damage to the brain and nervous system, slow growth and development, and other significant difficulties.

Further, the CDC states that long-term exposure to lead, such as in adults, can result in symptoms such as depression, forgetfulness, high blood pressure, heart disease, and kidney disease, and these symptoms may worsen over time. I believe that lead exposure must be addressed at a young age in order to prevent initial harm, as well as ultimately prevent worsening conditions in adults and seniors.

Unfortunately, the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program lacks adequate funding to distribute grants to every state at this time, and current grantees will each only receive awards of \$350,000 on average in Fiscal Year 2019, an amount that is insufficient to serve the approximately 20 million children the CDC expects will require grantee screening and referral services in this fiscal year. This funding issue is compounded by the President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2020, which recommends a cut of over 50 percent to this program.

To ensure the good health and success of our young people and families, I respectfully ask that the Subcommittee reject the administration's budget request and instead double its investment in the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program from \$35 million in Fiscal Year 2019 to \$70 million in Fiscal Year 2020. This investment will allow all 50 states, as well as the 10 local grantees currently served by the program, to each receive \$1 million in order to properly address the threat of lead. The remaining \$10 million will also allow the CDC the flexibility to increase awards in aforementioned communities or establish new partnerships.

Secondly, in addition to the need to address physical safety concerns involving lead and other hazards present in the home and surrounding environment, I would also like to raise my concerns to the Subcommittee regarding the ongoing need to ensure the mental wellness of our populace.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, approximately one-in-five adults in the United States suffers from a mental illness in a given year, but less than half will receive treatment. I would further note that one-in-five American children also struggle with a mental health disorder per year. In order to promote good mental health, the federal government must work hard with state and local partners to erase stigma, support awareness, and provide quality treatment and counseling.

For example, I believe one of the best ways to conduct these efforts is through our nation's K-12 school system, a place where students learn many of their formative skills, can develop positive behaviors and habits, and consider life-changing viewpoints and ideas. That is why I am asking the Subcommittee to continue its robust support for the federal Student Support and Academic Enrichment State Grant program. This funding helps to provide students with a well-rounded education and improved technological literacy, but also helps schools to reduce bullying and harassment, create drug-free environments, and expand school-based mental health and counseling services.

Despite repeated requests by the President to defund this program, I am pleased that most recently, the Subcommittee funded this program at a level of \$1.17 billion for Fiscal Year 2019. Looking forward to Fiscal Year 2020, it is my hope that the Subcommittee will provide a further increase to this valuable program, possibly including up to the fully authorized funding amount of \$1.6 billion.

Finally, I am asking that the Subcommittee take strong action to protect our citizens as they develop their careers as part of our nation's diverse workforce. Our efforts to safeguard our populace from public hazards, or to support them in their daily struggles with issues such as mental illness, will ultimately mean little if we do not also guarantee the safety and dignity of their daily labor. Specifically, I am concerned that despite our current efforts, 5,147 workers still died on the job in America in 2017, which is more than 14 workers per day. On a daily basis, 12,000 American workers will also sustain non-fatal injuries that are severe enough to require medical attention. It is clear that we must do better as a country to provide employers and employees with the training and education necessary to prevent these tragedies in the future.

That is why I am requesting that the Subcommittee include \$661 million for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in Fiscal Year 2020. Under its current Fiscal Year 2019 funding level of almost \$558 million, OSHA only has the resources necessary to inspect and enforce workplace standards at every applicable workplace once every 165 years. By providing a funding increase up to \$661 million, the Subcommittee would be restoring OSHA to its inflation-adjusted Fiscal Year 2010 funding level, and in turn improving OSHA's annual inspection backlog by 36 years. While this funding increase is not sufficient to completely ameliorate the current deficiency in workplace inspections and other efforts by OSHA, I believe providing this additional funding would be a firm step in the right direction and would represent a turning point in our nation's fight for workplace safety.

In conclusion, thank you to Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, and members of the Subcommittee for allowing me to testify today. I believe the programs I mentioned, among many others, deserve strong consideration as the Subcommittee crafts its bill for Fiscal Year 2020, and I remain wholly available to you all as a colleague and partner in this regard.