

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Joe Pitts  
Subcommittees on Health, Environment and the Economy  
Hearing on the Flint Water Crisis: Impacts and Lessons Learned  
April 13, 2016**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Today's hearing will provide an opportunity for our two Subcommittees to examine the issues related to the ongoing drinking water crisis and related public health effects in Flint, Michigan. Members of the committee already have a basic understanding of the situation that led to the high levels of lead discovered in the Flint drinking water system. The focus of today's hearing will be how we can best respond to help affected families in Flint, and how we can best move forward with solutions to ensure this does not happen again.

Our witnesses today will be able to provide key insights on what efforts both the federal and state government is undertaking and I look forward to their testimony.

According to the Mayo Clinic, lead poisoning "can severely effect mental and physical development" and can even be fatal at high levels. From a public health standpoint, we will want to better understand how the Administration has coordinated with the State of Michigan to provide technical assistance to state and local health departments including how they helped with case management and interventions with children identified with elevated blood lead levels.

Addressing the long-term health implications of potential exposure of children to dangerously high levels of lead is no simple fix. Some steps have already been taken to attempt to address the serious public health issues in the community.

Just last month, the Administration announced an expansion of Head Start and Early Head Start in Flint, Michigan with a one-time, emergency influx of \$3.6 million for these programs.

Additionally, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved Michigan's application to establish a five-year Medicaid demonstration – "Flint Michigan Section 1115 Demonstration" – in response to the public health emergency of lead exposure related to the Flint water system.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is allowing participants to use WIC vouchers for ready-to-feed infant formula, which does not need to be mixed with water. Participants also can swap powdered formula for ready-to-feed formula. WIC participants are being referred to the local health department for lead screenings and provided nutrition education on mitigating lead absorption through dietary changes.

These steps should help expand services available to ensure access to needed medical, social, educational and other services. We are eager to hear of other options that may be employed to alleviate the potential impacts lead can have on health.

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