

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

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

The tragic situation in Flint, Michigan, has captured the attention of the nation. The events that unfolded are unacceptable, and sadly there were missteps at *all* levels of government. What happened to Flint and its residents, especially the kids being poisoned in their own home, absolutely breaks your heart. And long after the media leaves Flint and the dust settles – families – real Michigan families – will be grappling with this tragedy for decades, indeed lifetimes.

That's why today's hearing will be a look *forward*. I've said before and will say again: I am not interested in finger pointing. There has been much of that done already. The focus needs to be on the folks who were impacted – especially the children, and what we can do to ensure this happens never again, anywhere. We are interested today in examining the underlying causes, various public health implications, and potential solutions moving forward.

While we can't rewind the clock to prevent the colossal failure of public trust, actions taken by both the state of Michigan and federal government are important steps in the right direction. The administration and state have coordinated to disseminate public health education, provide case management and interventions for children with elevated blood lead levels, and have worked to identify vulnerable populations in Flint who may need further, targeted outreach. The federal government should work with the state to ensure that proper testing and monitoring is taking place.

We know that early education is a critical factor in combating the effects of lead exposure. In February HHS awarded grants of \$250,000 to two health centers in Flint. These funds are being used to hire additional personnel and provide more testing, treatment, outreach, and education on the lead exposures. HHS has also announced an expansion of Head Start and Early Head Start in Flint, and a one time, emergency influx of \$3.6 million for these programs.

In March CMS also approved Michigan's application to establish a five-year Medicaid demonstration project in response to the public health emergency. Michigan will expand coverage for children up to age 21 and to pregnant women with incomes up to and including 400 percent of the federal poverty level who were served by the Flint water system from April 2014 through a state-specified date. Additionally, Michigan has indicated that it will implement a state program to make available unsubsidized coverage for higher-income populations in Flint.

Here in the House we also took action and passed H.R. 4470, the *Safe Drinking Water Act Improved Compliance Act*, by a vote of 416-2. This bipartisan solution, championed by Flint Congressman Dan Kildee and co-sponsored by the entire Michigan delegation, ensures that the public is notified of excessive lead levels in their drinking water, and also clarifies and improves the process of federal, state, and city officials communicating promptly with each other – as they should. Communities across the country, mine included are worried about water infrastructure issues. And our bipartisan bill specifically calls on EPA to help communities develop a strategic plan for dealing with emergencies like this *before* they happen.

Today, we expect to learn more from EPA about its plans with the Lead and Copper Rule under the Safe Drinking Water Act. We will also learn from Michigan's Keith Creagh and Nick Lyons on what steps the state and community are taking to get Flint water back up to national standards. On the second panel, we will hear from an association of water utilities and an association of state drinking water regulators what lessons they have learned, and what they are doing to apply those lessons. We will also hear from Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, program director, pediatric residency at the Hurley Children's Hospital. Dr. Mona, as she is called, and I met in February, and I'm pleased she is with us today. Dr. Mona provides an important perspective on children's health and how we should be working together moving forward.

It is my hope this hearing will serve as a valuable opportunity to hear more about this important work, ideas for further steps that can be taken by the federal government and state of Michigan to help the people of Flint, and how Congress can ensure with confidence this never happens again.

We cannot and we will not forget those in Flint who have been impacted by this tragedy. No amount of regrets or words can actually fix what's broken – we need concrete action.

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