

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy
and Subcommittee on Health
“Flint Water Crisis: Impacts and Lessons Learned”
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Nick Lyon
Director, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
Opening Statement

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- Thank you, Chairmen Shimkus and Pitts and Ranking Members Tonko and Green, and Members of the Subcommittees, for inviting me to this joint subcommittee hearing to discuss these important issues.
- My priority as director for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is to ensure a healthy, safe, and stable environment for all Michigan families.
- I know that the people of Flint are hurt. I know that they are upset. And I recognize that there is anger and mistrust, rightfully so.
- Despite the efforts of many dedicated and well qualified people both at the MDHHS and locally, the citizens deserve better.
- We have initiated an internal review in addition to the joint investigation being completed by the Office of Auditor General and Office of the Inspector General.
- We will address whatever shortcomings are identified by these reviews within my department and will properly address issues and factors that affected our response.
- We know that we could have done better.
- My heart goes out to the families impacted and that's why I'm here today – to talk to you about what Governor Snyder's Administration, and particularly the MDHHS, is doing to provide relief to the people of Flint and ensure that the necessary services are provided in the future.
- We are now looking forward at what we can do to improve the health and quality of life for not only Flint, but for all people in Michigan.
- We have already taken steps to restructure areas within our department to better align programs with surveillance and to ensure local health issues such as the ones we are discussing today are quickly elevated for immediate follow up.
- For example, we have increased case management for all children with elevated blood lead levels in Flint to ensure that their health is immediately being addressed.
- In October, we funded additional nurse case managers at the Genesee County Health Department to work with families of every Flint child who has tested with elevated blood lead levels.
- We are aggressively working to increase nurse case management services in the community. This will improve outreach and assure continuity of care.
- And as part of our nurse case management efforts in Flint, we are now regularly testing water as a potential source of lead during follow up with families, in addition to considering paint, soil, and dust exposures in homes.

- We are also working closely with our Medicaid Health Plans to increase the number of children in Flint tested for lead.
- While lead testing is required for all children enrolled in Medicaid, this is an area we continue to improve upon with the recent rebid for Michigan's Medicaid Health Plans emphasizing the need to improve lead testing rates.
- We are also working closely with all healthcare providers to ensure that all children are screened appropriately for lead.
- In addition, the Flint Water Advisory Task Force has issued a comprehensive set of recommendations that we are actively reviewing for implementation.
- For instance, we know that good nutrition works to prevent the absorption of lead into the body.
- To increase access to sources of nutritious foods in Flint, we are working closely with the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan to arrange mobile food bank deliveries in 23 sites across the city.
- We are assisting the Michigan Department of Education in the coordination and placement of nine new nurses in Flint community schools. We've also added additional schools to our existing program for child and adolescent service centers.
- We are developing and coordinating long-term educational and behavioral screening tools, services and supports for the children of Flint.
- We are working with the Genesee Health System and the Flint Community Resilience Group to develop and implement mental health first aid to assist the community in their recovery.
- And most recently, we are working to finalize a contract with the Genesee County Community Action Resource Department to replace water heaters for residents whose water heaters have been damaged.
- Throughout this emergency, we have greatly appreciated the support of our federal partners.
- Our Department has six federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention personnel embedded within our programs, who continue to work closely with Genesee County Health Department and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services as part of our efforts.
- Through those resources that we have available to us, we have worked closely with our CDC partners in the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to create and release a Legionella toolkit for healthcare facilities and large buildings to prevent the growth of Legionella in water systems.
- Ultimately our hope is to help other communities in Michigan and across the country learn, as we have, how to prepare for and even prevent lead exposure and Legionella outbreaks such as this.

- We also appreciate the assistance of our partners at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services who approved our application to extend Medicaid benefits to pregnant women and children under the age of 21 up to 400% of the federal poverty level, who were served by the Flint water system.
- The Medicaid waiver will ensure access to primary care and provide targeted case management services to coordinate all physical and behavioral health related services for children potentially exposed to lead.
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is providing technical assistance in many areas, and the United States Department of Agriculture has approved our requests to utilize our Women, Infants and Children Program resources to test children for lead and enhance our nutritional education efforts.
- In implementing Governor Snyder's action plan, we are working with Dr. Hanna-Attisha and Professor Marc Edwards through the Flint Water Interagency Coordinating Committee.
- I want to thank Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, who will be testifying on the next panel, for bringing this issue to light and for continuing every day to help the families and children of Flint. She is an invaluable partner as we deliver on our commitment to provide the necessary health care services to these families.
- On behalf of the Snyder Administration, I want to assure you that we stand committed to fixing this problem for the people of Flint, and to ensure this does not happen again in Michigan or anywhere else.
- Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to answering your questions.