



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
December 18, 2014

The Honorable John Shimkus
Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2217 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shimkus,

Thank you for convening the hearing, "Cyanotoxins in Drinking Water." Ensuring the safety of our nation's drinking water supplies is a critical national issue, and I am encouraged that our subcommittee is taking the lead in addressing threats posed by bacterial pollution.

This past August, more than half a million residents of Toledo, Ohio could not drink their city's water because it had been contaminated by an algae bloom of cyanotoxin bacteria. Unfortunately, this was not a unique event. Lake Erie, the other Great Lakes, and many other freshwater and marine environments across the United States are susceptible to outbreaks of blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) outbreaks. In many of these cases, source water for municipal – and private – drinking water supply is affected, thereby creating a health risk for residents.

Blue-green algae is not the only threat to municipal drinking water supplies. A chemical spill near Charleston, West Virginia in January caused major disruptions for the surrounding population. It has been estimated that in 2011, more than 194 million pounds of chemicals were spilled into U.S. rivers, streams, lakes, and coastal areas – all of which had the potential to significantly disrupt drinking water supplies for nearby populations.

There are several commonly used technical solutions to address the challenges posed by the cyanotoxins released by blue-green algae. One of the solutions – granular activated carbon – is a product manufactured by Calgon Carbon, which is headquartered in my congressional district. Granular activated carbon is effective for the removal of cyanotoxins during blue-green algae outbreaks. An important aspect of the use of granular activated carbon is that it 'removes' chemicals from water rather than converting those chemicals to another form by adding more, or different chemicals to the water.

Unfortunately, not all drinking water treatment facilities are equipped with these solutions, despite the fact they could be implemented at relatively minimal costs. For

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example, the addition of granular activated carbon treatment at a mid-sized drinking water treatment plant would cost less than the monthly purchase of two 16 ounce bottles of water from the local convenience store. Use of this technology should be a vital component of any regulatory or legislative change to prevent dangerous algae blooms in the future.

Again, thank you for convening a hearing on this critical issue. I stand ready to assist you on this matter in any way possible.

Sincerely,



Tim Murphy
Member of Congress

TM:bdg

cc: The Honorable Robert Latta