

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 2, 2016

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Lead poisoning can cause severe and lasting harms to the developing brains of our children, including reduced IQ, behavioral problems, and learning disabilities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 535,000 American children under six years of age are affected by lead poisoning. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), seventy percent of these lead poisoning cases are the result of dust exposure from lead-based paint in homes built prior to 1978. This preventable condition traps generations in poverty and can rob children of their opportunity to succeed.

Preventing lead poisoning in children who live in our nation's housing has long been a priority for the Committee. Over the last decade, we have provided more than \$1 billion for initiatives that address lead-based paint hazards. However, recent reports of lead-based paint hazards in HUD-assisted housing raise concerns that HUD has insufficient oversight to ensure that public housing agencies and property owners comply with regulations regarding inspections for and remediation of lead-based paint hazards. Given the impact that lead-based paint hazards continue to have on our nation's children, we ask for more information on HUD's policies, procedures, and processes for addressing this problem.

Subsequently, we request that GAO examine these issues and provide a report on:

1. The effectiveness of federal programs for addressing lead-based paint hazards in dwellings;
2. Current partnerships between public housing agencies (including State housing finance agencies) and public health agencies that address lead-based paint hazards, and determine whether those partnerships could be replicated and enhanced through improved data collection, analysis, and dissemination among stakeholders;
3. Gaps in compliance and enforcement of HUD's lead-based paint regulations;
4. Opportunities for improving coordination and leveraging of public and private funds in order to reduce the federal costs associated with identifying and remediating lead-based paint hazards;

5. The effectiveness and efficiency of existing HUD protocols for identifying and addressing lead-based paint hazards, and determine whether those protocols are aligned with accepted environmental health practices to ensure the best and appropriate health outcomes and to reduce further exposure; and
6. HUD's processes for assessing risks of lead-based paint hazards during initial and periodic inspections in dwellings occupied by households assisted under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program and the impact, if any, on landlord participation and the availability of affordable housing.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. Please contact Rajat Mathur, Jennifer Hollrah, Jordan Stone, and Joe Carlile of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittees of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,



Susan Collins, Chairman
U.S. Senate
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
and Related Agencies



Mario Diaz-Balart, Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban development
and Related Agencies



Jack Reed, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies



David Price, Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies