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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

January 23, 2018

Mr. Mitchell Wolfe
Acting Director
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
395 E St SW Ste 9100
Washington, DC 20472-3298

Dear Mr. Wolfe,

I am writing this letter to seek information in regard to the federally funded Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, administered by the City of Milwaukee.

As you know, the 2014 crisis in Flint, Michigan brought national attention to the issue of lead in drinking water, as well as the devastating health consequences on young children. A couple years later, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families released their analysis of the rate of lead poisoning among children in Wisconsin. This analysis showed that the rate of lead poisoning among children in Wisconsin is nearly equal to Flint, Michigan. In Wisconsin, 4.6% of children under the age of 6 who were tested had lead poisoning; Flint, Michigan's rate was 4.9%. The analysis further found that a disproportionate number of African-American children had lead poisoning.

I mention the facts above in order to illustrate the seriousness of lead poisoning in the State of Wisconsin and, in particular, within the 4th Congressional District and the City of Milwaukee, which has the largest concentration of lead service lines in the state. The City of Milwaukee Health Department tests children for lead exposure through the earlier mentioned Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. Recently, it was reported that the City of Milwaukee Health Department failed to provide notification to thousands of families whose children tested positive for elevated blood lead levels (see attached article).

As a result of the lack of notification, the City of Milwaukee instituted a number of personnel changes, citing mismanagement in the City of Milwaukee Health Department. I am concerned about my constituents, especially the children who may not have received appropriate care. I urge you to investigate the administration of this program and ensure it is in compliance with the guidelines for lead poisoning as established by the federal Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program.

The City of Milwaukee's CDC Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program has been considered a model program for the nation in the past. The program is vital to the well-being of Milwaukee's children and must *continue* to operate at a high standard to mitigate exposure to lead. I appreciate your timely consideration of this request. Please feel free to contact my office if you have questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gwen Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gwen" and last name "Moore" clearly distinguishable.

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

GM/KS

Attachment

Mayor Barrett fields tough questions about lead level notifications at special council meeting

Rikki Mitchell (TMJ4)

Jan 17, 2018

An investigation has begun into why the Milwaukee Health Department failed to notify thousands of families about elevated lead levels in their children.

During a special common council committee meeting Wednesday afternoon, Mayor Tom Barrett said he only learned about this issue on January 4.

But the time period in question goes back to 2015. Several questions were asked about why it took so long to learn about this and what happened in 2015 to create this issue. Barrett replied, "that's part of the mystery."

Barrett said during the meeting that last year alone, the health department can not find any documentation that notification was made to 500 families where children tested high for lead.

"It certainly appears that those letters were produced, but were those letters sent out?" asked Barrett. "Those 500 letters that were documented, were they sent out? Was it sloppy bookkeeping or were they never sent out? I don't have the answer to that question."

He says health providers have a legal requirement to notify families when children test high for lead, in addition to the health department's notification.

"I have no reason to believe that wasn't occurring," he said. "I believe that happened, can I say that with certainty? No."

Because it's unclear who did and didn't receive a letter, Barrett says 8,000 new letters are going out to all families.

But some aldermen are saying that's not enough.

"I assume you have no objection to a thorough investigation?" asked Ald. Bob Donovan to Barrett. "This does involve federal grants...you wouldn't have any objection to the U.S. Attorney investigation?"

Barrett replied, "I am far more interested in solving the problem right now, that's my paramount concern."

Earlier in the day, the common council voted unanimously to allow an outside audit of the health department.

"What else could possibly be going on in that department that we're not aware of?" said Ald. Tony Zielinski. "The sooner we get to the bottom of what's going on, the better off we're going to be in terms of coming up with a plan of action to deal with it."

Zielinski asked the mayor if he would sign his approval of the audit right away so it can begin. The mayor said he wants to see it first, but that he's happy for it to take place.

What's unclear is how the city will pay for it.

<https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/mayor-barrett-fields-tough-questions-about-lead-level-notifications-at-special-council-meeting>