



## ADVOCATES OBJECT TO DEVASTATING CUT TO LEAD POISONING PREVENTION PROGRAM

*Fiscal Year 2012 Omnibus Bill Cuts CDC's Lead Poisoning Prevention Program By 94%*

The final appropriations bill for FY12 provides only \$2 million for CDC's Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program—down from \$29 million in FY11. Nearly a half million children rely on the services of this program, which funds 35 state health departments (and their local partners) to monitor blood lead screening and respond to every child who has an elevated blood lead level with a home inspection and referrals for medical intervention and lead remediation. The program also *prevents* the disease through housing policies, community education, and outreach.

By agreeing to this level of funding, Congress is abandoning low-income, African American, and Latino children who are disproportionately impacted by lead. Nationally, African American children are three times more likely to suffer from lead poisoning. In some locales, African American and Latino children are eight to nine times more likely to enter school with a history of lead poisoning.

The funding cut will widen the achievement gap between white and minority students, and between wealthy and poor students. High blood lead levels are associated with a decline of about 15% in reading and math scores. Children poisoned by lead are seven times more likely to drop out of school and six times more likely to end up in the juvenile justice system. Studies show that educating a child with lead poisoning costs an extra \$38,000. If even half of the children with lead poisoning incur these costs--that's a \$10 billion price tag.

The funding decision follows on the heels of a recommendation by an advisory committee to CDC to lower the threshold for when a child is considered to have so much lead in his or her blood that follow up action is needed. The resulting change in the "action level" will double the caseload of poisoned kids that need the health departments' help.

Lead poisoning is completely preventable but far from solved. Over 30 million homes contain lead-based paint, and lead in water and soil are still significant sources of exposure for children. Without this program, we will not have reliable data to quickly identify new sources of lead poisoning, or the communities that are at the greatest risk. We are calling on President Obama and Secretary Sebelius to reverse this devastating budget cut by reallocating dollars in FY12 and fully restoring the program in FY13 to \$34 million.