



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JUN 8 2011

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Pamela Shubat, Ph.D.
Chairwoman
Environmental Health Division
Minnesota Department of Health
625 North Robert Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-2538

Dear Dr. Shubat:

Thank you for your thoughtful recommendations on asthma disparities and the living and learning environments. I especially want to convey my appreciation to the members of the Indoor Environment Workgroup for their report on asthma disparities. I assure you that we at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will fully consider your recommendations as we continue our work to reduce the impact of asthma in our nation, particularly for children and other disproportionately affected populations.

The EPA is committed to addressing disparities in childhood asthma using all of the tools and resources at our disposal: research, regulations and voluntary programs. During this time of financial constraints, we are also committed to closely coordinating and collaborating with agencies across the executive branch to seek the best possible health improvements.

As you and your colleagues point out, indoor allergens and irritants that cause or exacerbate asthma are far too prevalent in the environments in which our most vulnerable populations – children and low-income families – live and learn. Working with the Department of Health and Human Services on the Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children, the EPA is pursuing an aggressive agenda to coordinate and collaborate across all federal agencies to deliver better environmental-health outcomes for children. The task force is focused on reducing asthma disparities and on two other priority areas that also have an impact on childhood asthma: settings and chemical exposures.

Since the December 2010 Asthma Disparities Workshop, we have been working closely with the National Institutes for Health, the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Agriculture and others to draft a coordinated federal action plan to reduce asthma disparities. I am pleased to let you know that several of your recommendations on interagency collaboration are being considered for this draft plan. In particular, we are considering asthma-friendly housing, including the provision for smoke-free public housing by HUD; healthy learning environments and deploying community-level systems that ensure sustainable, holistic asthma care.

We believe that our work to educate and equip families to take action, our efforts to transform the nation's building stock through public and private partnerships and our continued commitment to sound science and effective collaborations with our federal health, housing and education partners and others can improve the environmental conditions that contribute to childhood asthma disparities and create a better quality of life for families most in need.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on this critical environmental health issue, and I thank you once more for your valuable insight.

Sincerely,



Lisa P. Jackson

Thank you!