



## THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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Dr. Sheela Sathyanarayana  
Chairwoman  
Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee  
University of Washington Department of Pediatrics  
Mailstop CW8-6  
P.O. Box 5371  
Seattle, Washington 98145-5005

Dear Dr. Sathyanarayana:

Thank you for your November 14, 2013, letter offering recommendations on how social determinants of health can be considered in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency efforts through guidance, models, further research and grants. Both the nature of social determinants of health and your detailed comments will require a variety of interdisciplinary approaches to address the recommendations. Below we have outlined how our current work and partnerships respond to your recommendations as well as identify opportunities for us to have an even greater impact.

*Making a Visible Difference in Communities across the Country* is one of the EPA's crosscutting priority themes. The EPA must work collaboratively across all programs and hand-in-hand with other federal agencies, states, tribes and other stakeholders to improve the health of all families and protect the environment. The EPA has partnered with the National Institute of Minority Health Disparities to support the establishment of transdisciplinary networks of excellence in health-disparities research that engages in the complex interaction of biological, social and environmental determinants of population health. Addressing social determinants is also fundamental to the work of the pediatric environmental-health specialty units. Doctors in regional pediatric environmental-health specialty units routinely partner with communities to combat local environmental-health issues. The EPA can use these existing relationships to translate research findings and empower communities with tools and strategies that take social determinants of health into account. The health indicators presented in the third edition of *America's Children in the Environment* and principles outlined in the Coordinated Federal Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Asthma Disparities are existing resources that can also be applied to community-based work.

The Office of Research and Development, in partnership with EPA regional offices, is working with communities on problem-specific health-impact assessments that integrate environmental considerations and impacts to inform decisions. An essential part of this effort is the inclusion of best practices and lessons learned in each health-impact assessment as well as training approaches to enhance the use of health-impact assessments in other community settings and situations.

In addition, the EPA has initiated research strategies relevant to the consideration of social determinants of health in programs and policies. ORD is currently working with several EPA partners to develop

Environmental Justice and Children's Environmental Health Research Roadmaps. These roadmaps will show how ORD's research will address environmental justice and vulnerable populations as well as susceptible life stages, including prenatal and childhood, in its national research programs during the next five years. A priority of these plans is evaluating the role of social determinants of health as modifiers of exposure and effects of environmental exposures to xenobiotics and other harmful substances. ORD is also planning to develop a project within the Sustainable and Healthy Community National Research Program to assess social determinants of health and chemical exposures for vulnerable populations. One focus area of this proposed project is to study how the interrelationship between the built, natural and social environments affects susceptibility to chemical and nonchemical stressors.

We appreciate the Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee's thoughtful consideration of social determinants of health and advice to the EPA. We acknowledge the tremendous amount of effort still needed in this area. The EPA will continue to collaborate with partners to minimize negative environmental exposures and adverse effects of such exposures that may be magnified by social determinants of health. Thank you for your continued dedication to protecting children.

Sincerely,



Gina McCarthy

cc: Lek Kadeli, Acting Assistant Administrator, ORD  
Matthew Tejada, Director, Office of Environmental Justice  
Khesha Reed, Acting Director, OCHP  
Tina Bahadori, Chemical Safety for Sustainability Research Program, ORD  
Michael Slimak, Sustainable and Healthy Communities Research Program, ORD