



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

July 2, 2018

Senator Richard Durbin
711 Hart Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Tim Scott
717 Hart Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Durbin and Scott,

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to express our support for your bipartisan legislation, S. 1845, entitled the Lead-Safe Housing for Kids Act of 2017.

CHA agrees that the current law, which states that a child must be diagnosed with lead poisoning before a lead hazard inspection takes place in Section 8 housing or Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program housing, is completely unacceptable. According to the Shriver Center, HCV program houses are concentrated in areas with the highest risk of lead poisoning. In 2016, The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) identified 450,000 federally assisted housing units built before 1978 with at least one child living there. Of those, there were 57,000 federally assisted housing units with an identified lead hazard and 62,000 public housing units in need of lead abatement. Your legislation would ensure that this protocol is improved, requiring stricter inspection standards to reduce the prevalence of children with lead poisoning.

As children are among the most vulnerable members of our society, their health and well-being should be our first priority. Brain damage from lead exposure is immediate and irreversible, and has lifelong, negative effects on a child's mental, physical, and behavioral health. Through no fault of their own, many of these children are living in houses that HUD knows are toxic, and yet nothing is done to prevent or fix the issue. We endorse this legislation because it aligns with Catholic social teachings of caring for those who are in need, protecting those who are vulnerable, and striving for an equal and just society.

As our country looks for ways to improve the quality of life and promote equality for low-income families and children, we believe that improving lead inspection standards will help us reach this goal, and your legislation is an essential piece to move us in that direction.

Sincerely,

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO