January 18, 2016

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 64,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I write to you regarding the drinking water emergency in Flint, Michigan and the exposure of its citizens to lead, a potent neurotoxin.

There is no safe level of exposure for children. Lead damage is permanent and irreversible. Children with elevated lead levels are more likely to have behavior problems, attention deficit and reading disabilities, and fail to graduate from high school, in addition to experiencing a host of other impairments to their developing cardiovascular, immune and endocrine systems.¹ According to census data, an estimated 8,000 – 9,000 children under the age of 6 have been exposed to lead via the Flint drinking water. These children and their families will need long-term help in coping with the ways this lead exposure will impact their physical and behavioral health, their schooling, their exposure to toxic stress, and much more.

The AAP urges you to declare a public health emergency in Flint. We believe this declaration should engage the resources of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Education in addressing the far-reaching health consequences of this lead poisoning.

On behalf of the AAP, I respectfully request a meeting between Administration officials and our pediatric experts to discuss how we may assist with federal efforts to address the child health emergency in Flint.

With the tremendous work of the Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, including Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, FAAP, of the Hurley Children’s Hospital/Michigan State University, the American Academy of Pediatrics has a comprehensive set of evidence-based interventions for inclusion in the emergency response to the Flint lead exposure. These recommendations, which span the domains of education, nutrition, and physical and mental health, are proven interventions to optimize children’s health, especially for children with toxic stress exposures.
The Academy stands ready to assist in the additional long-term efforts that will be required to assist the children of Flint in dealing with this large-scale, long-term public health tragedy.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Benard P. Dreyer, MD, FAAP
President

BPD/ag

Cc: The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Secretary, Dept. of Health and Human Services
The Honorable Thomas Frieden, MD, MPH, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The Honorable Gina McCarthy, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
The Honorable John B. King, Jr., Secretary, Dept. of Education
U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senator Gary Peters
U.S. Representative Dan Kildee
Mona Hanna-Attisha, MD, MPH, FAAP