

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 22, 2016

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

The drinking water emergency in Flint will have implications that extend far beyond today and will require a significant amount of support from health care stakeholders. We appreciate the Department of Health and Human Service's leadership role to mitigate the impact of this disaster, which was the direct result of poor decision making by the state of Michigan. It is critical that we do our best to ensure families in Flint have access to the health care services they will certainly need. We ask that you commit additional resources to assist Flint families to secure health care coverage before the January 31, 2016 open enrollment deadline.

Currently, we are pursuing all avenues of outreach – including using our congressional staff and resources to ensure Flint residents have the information they need to enroll in health care coverage. The health implications of this catastrophe are severe and its impact is irreversible, but signing Flint residents up for quality health care insurance will improve their long-term health outcomes.

We understand the Department of Health and Human Services has existing resources that can be used to conduct significant outreach and spread awareness to individuals about available health plans. We urge you to direct additional resources to Flint that can be used to enroll residents in health care coverage. Importantly, we ask that you engage and coordinate with clergy, schools, water distribution centers and other local stakeholders as you deem appropriate.

In addition, given the severity of this crisis, we ask that you assess whether it is appropriate to extend the open enrollment period for Flint residents. We are working diligently to increase health care enrollment in Flint ahead of the approaching deadline. However, a special enrollment period would provide more time for Flint residents to enroll in quality health plans that are vital to their future health.

Thank you for your timely consideration of this request and for your work in the City of Flint. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices should you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
U.S. Senator



Dan Kildee
Member of Congress

cc: Dr. Nicole Lurie, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, HHS
David Samaniego, Federal Coordinating Officer, FEMA