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January 11, 2016

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest  
Washington, DC 20500

President Obama:

Last week, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder declared a state of emergency for the city of Flint – a long overdue action – due to high lead levels in the city’s drinking water. It is an emergency that is a direct result of decisions made by the state government itself, decisions that resulted in thousands of children being poisoned by lead in their drinking water.

For months, the state of Michigan failed to recognize and respond to the ongoing public health emergency, which was created when a state-appointed emergency financial manager made the decision to switch the city’s drinking water source. Although there has been an increase in state resources in my hometown over the past few days, the state’s response still does not nearly address the immediate or long-term needs in Flint that are a result of the state’s decisions.

I write to provide you with an overview of how the Flint water crisis was created, what has been done so far, and what federal resources could help in overcoming this man-made disaster.

The state of Michigan eliminated state support for cities over the past decade, which meant the loss of \$50 million to the city of Flint. That decision precipitated a financial crisis in Flint due to its already stressed finances resulting from decades of disinvestment and the loss of its manufacturing base and population decline. As a result, in December of 2011, Flint’s democratically elected officials were removed by the governor and the city was put under control of an emergency manager.

In April 2013, the state-appointed emergency financial manager decided to switch Flint’s drinking water source from the Detroit Water and Sewer Authority, which draws its water from Lake Huron, to the Flint River in order to save money while a new regional pipeline was being built. In April of 2014, the state made the fateful switch to the Flint River as its drinking water source. Since then, the water became discolored and poor tasting resulting in five violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act in less than a year.

In February 2015, after being ignored by officials at Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), a Flint resident contacted the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) because of the high levels of lead in her water. The EPA tested the resident’s water and released a draft memo in June that questioned the safety of the water in Flint. In September, Dr. Marc Edwards, a professor from Virginia Tech, released a study that showed the water in Flint had dangerous levels of lead, in direct contradiction of MDEQ’s repeated assurances that the water was safe. Later that month, a local pediatrician, Dr. Mona

Hanna-Attisha, released her own report showing that there were increased blood lead levels in children as a result of the water's lead content. After numerous attempts by the state to discredit the work of both researchers, on October 8, 2015, the state finally helped facilitate a transition back to the Detroit water supply. Even then, the state failed to take responsibility, requiring \$2 million to be paid by the financially stressed city of Flint to reconnect to Detroit water.

Since learning about the dangerous lead levels in the water, I have requested assistance from the EPA, the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for a variety of federal resources (attached). As a result of those requests, the federal government has provided the following resources to Flint:

- The EPA's creation of the Flint Drinking Water Task Force that has proved critical technical assistance in ways to improve testing and treatment of Flint's water;
- The EPA conducting an in-depth audit of MDEQ's Drinking Water Program;
- FEMA sent employees to work with the state after the state's emergency declaration and shipments of water;
- The Corporation for National and Community Service dispatched additional AmeriCorps volunteers to Flint to respond to the crisis.

I have made numerous requests for federal assistance and I am greatly appreciative of what Flint has received so far. However, we need more federal resources to respond to not only the immediate needs of providing Flint residents with bottled water and water filters, but also the long term impacts of lead on the Flint community, especially its children. Thus, as the community continues to develop its comprehensive strategy for a long term response to the water crisis, I ask that you direct federal resources to help my hometown in three major ways:

1. **Funding secondary and tertiary prevention strategies.** According to the medical experts, it is impossible to reverse the damage of exposure to lead, but steps can be taken to mitigate its impacts. This would include:

- Providing universal access for Flint's children to early childhood education, such as Headstart and Pre-Kindergarten.
- Improving nutritional support through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), increasing access to healthy foods, and breastfeeding promotion.
- Increasing resources in the Flint schools for: school nurses; literacy education; before, after and summer school programming; additional special education capacity and counseling; and additional educational support for students throughout their academic careers.
- Expanding medical treatment for services such as: yearly tracking of medical conditions including mental health; promotion of available resources through Medicaid; and support for additional medical professionals in the area using the existing medical community infrastructure.
- Supporting parents and caregivers to respond to children that have been exposed to high levels of lead.
- Improving education and outreach for the community on impacts of lead and how to avoid contact.

2. **Repairing the severely damaged water infrastructure.** The corrosiveness of the water accelerated damage to the water infrastructure in Flint and the city desperately needs the resources to repair the damage.

- Replacing all private and public lead service lines in Flint through forgivable loans from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF).
- Support allowing loans made in previous fiscal years under DWSRF to be forgiven, freeing local resources to be utilized to overcome this crisis rather than repayment of past loans to the state.
- Increasing funding to the DWSRF.

**3. Repairing the damaged reputation of Flint.** The water crisis has significantly damaged Flint's reputation and its ability to compete for industry. Federal assistance will be required to rebuild the Flint economy. I am asking that you:

- Direct all federal agencies to provide additional support to the city of Flint as it endeavors to rebuild itself and its economy in light of the devastating reputational loss associated with this state-created crisis.
- Accept my invitation to visit Flint. I understand you are traveling to Detroit, Mich. on January 20, 2015. I, along with members in my community, extend an open invitation for you to come to Flint at any time to see the crisis for yourself. If that date is not possible, consider a visit to Flint in the very near future.
- Direct a person from the White House to lead the federal government's response to the Flint water crisis and help coordinate federal resources to provide to Flint.

The community and surrounding region has come together to help the people of Flint who have been poisoned. Unfortunately, the state continues to fail in providing the broad support that is needed – and is morally required – to respond to this crisis. The state has thus far refused to ask the federal government for resources, and my hometown cannot wait any longer. Each day that passes without an adequate response is a day that will be lost for the children of Flint forever.

Simply put, the indifference shown by the state of Michigan is beyond comprehension. The people of Flint and I have no confidence that the state of Michigan will provide a response in measure way equal to the gravity of the situation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dan Kildee  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS