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## EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt Hosts Nation's Leaders to Discuss Efforts to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposure

WASHINGTON (February 16, 2018) - Yesterday, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt hosted fellow Cabinet members and other key senior leaders to outline a federal strategy to reduce childhood lead exposure and associated health risks.

“Lead exposure poses a significant health threat to hundreds of thousands of American children,” said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. “By refocusing Agency efforts, we can work with our government partners to develop solutions that address lead exposure and improve health outcomes for children.”

Administrator Pruitt was joined by members or their designees of the *President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children* (Task Force), and other principals to collaborate on a clear direction in the development and implementation of a new *Federal Strategy to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposures and Eliminate Associated Health Impacts*. The Task Force is co-chaired by Administrator Pruitt and Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar. Notable attendees included: Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Ben Carson, Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta, and HHS Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan.

“Reducing lead exposure for children and addressing the associated health impacts of exposure is a top priority at HHS, and across the Executive Branch,” said **Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar** “We are fully committed to drafting a federal strategy to fight this continuing threat to infants and children.”

“Children perform better at school and in life if they live in a healthy home,” said **Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson**. “A healthy start at home translates to a successful life outside of the home. HUD is committed to working across Federal agencies and with local communities to eradicate lead poisoning to make sure our homes are safe and ensure positive outcomes for families and their kids.”

“Far too many Americans are exposed to lead in their workplace,” said **Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta**. “Finding solutions to better protect these workers and minimize the amount of lead that is taken home, and potentially exposed to their children, is a priority.”

Administrator Pruitt opened the meeting with his vision for a collaborative multi-federal agency approach to reduce childhood lead exposure across the country and his plans to make it a priority for EPA’s 2018 agenda. Following his remarks, each Task Force member or their designee shared how their respective agency can best contribute to the Task Force’s goals on lead and how the issue can be best communicated to the public.

At the meeting, attendees agreed to:

- Make addressing childhood lead exposure a priority for Task Force departments and agencies;
- Five goals that frame the new *Federal Strategy to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposures and Eliminate Associated Health Impacts*;
- Set an aggressive, near-term timeline for the Task Force to complete its work to draft the strategy; and,
- Schedule a follow-up principals meeting or event to issue the federal strategy and discuss next steps.

**Representatives from the following agencies or offices attended:**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

U.S. Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Office of Management and Budget

Office of Environmental and Public Health

Office of Science and Technology Policy

Council on Economic Advisers

Council for Environmental Quality

**Background on President’s Task Force and the challenges of childhood lead exposure:**

Since the 1970s, EPA and other federal agencies have spearheaded and implemented many actions resulting in a significant reduction of lead exposure throughout our country. However, lead exposure, particularly at higher doses, continues to pose a significant health and safety threat to children, preventing them from reaching the fullest potential of their health, their intellect, and their future. No blood lead level is safe for children. The time is now to impact future generations. EPA and our federal partners are committed to collaborate to address this threat, and improve health outcomes for our nation’s most vulnerable citizens - our children.

*The President’s Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children*, which was established in 1997 by Executive Order 13045, is well positioned to take a leading role to address this problem. In 2000, the Task Force issued its first national strategy to address the childhood lead exposure. That first strategy focused primarily on expanding efforts to correct lead paint hazards (especially in low income housing) and put forward recommendations aimed at eliminating childhood lead exposure in the United States as a major public health problem by the year 2010.

Now, however, tackling the problem at this stage requires a coordinated federal-wide effort that evaluates the predominant sources of lead and also includes improving identification and treatment of children identified as lead exposed. It requires a more robust and coordinated communication with parents and others regarding the risks and methods to reduce exposure and a collaborative multi-agency research plan. To this end, the Task Force has been working on a new draft federal strategy that seeks to identify opportunities, including the 58 federal programs currently working on the issue.

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