

Sign-on letter on Bush Admin's rejection of CDC nominees to the Advisory Committee on Lead in favor of industry nominees

October 28, 2002

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We, the undersigned individuals and organizations from the public health, pediatric, environmental, public interest, and affected communities, are disappointed and concerned that you overruled the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in appointing individuals selected by the lead industry to the Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention (ACCLPP). We ask you to remove Dr. William Banner from this panel immediately. We urge you to rely on CDC's recommendations in making future appointments.

At the recent meeting of the ACCLPP, one new member stated publicly that a representative of the lead industry approached him and had him appointed to the Advisory Committee. We find it troubling that the nation's chief health agency would accept the counsel of the lead industry, which has a long, sordid, and well-documented history of distorting and misrepresenting health issues related to lead. Your recent appointments undermine public confidence in HHS's commitment to end childhood lead poisoning in the U.S. by 2010.

Of all of the industry-supported appointments, it is most illogical for you to call on Dr. William Banner for advice about lead poisoning prevention. According to his recent court deposition on behalf of the lead industry, Dr. Banner believes that blood lead levels below 70 ug/dL pose no health problems for children. This position is at least 40 years out of step with contemporary medical thought and counter to all existing federal policies and standards. In our collective judgment, such a position should disqualify Dr. Banner as an advisor on prevention policy.

In securing advice on lead poisoning prevention, CDC has a demonstrated track record of success in selecting qualified individuals with varied experience, perspective, and opinion. Over the years, ACCLPP members have expressed a range of viewpoints, which have ultimately yielded sound public health policy recommendations. In the future, we urge you to rely on CDC — not the lead industry — to select individuals who can provide the best possible advice for protecting children from lead poisoning, including reducing its disproportionately adverse effects on low-income African-American children.

Sincerely,

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