

HIGHLIGHTS OF “Research, Hazard Intervention, and National Outreach for Healthier Homes Act”

The Research, Hazard Intervention, and National Outreach for Healthier Homes Act of 2008 (RHINO-HH) emphasizes cost-effective approaches and market-based incentives to make homes healthier and safer without detracting from their affordability. The multi-faceted legislation aims to improve research, enhance the capacity of federal programs, and expand national outreach efforts.

IMPROVING RESEARCH

- **Identify Hazards:** The bill jointly tasks EPA and NIH with research on the health effects of housing-related hazards. The agencies would identify hazards that require further research, establish priorities, and coordinate research plans.
- **Demonstrate Cost-Effective Assessment and Control Methods:** The bill funds targeted studies at HUD to advance the development and adoption of evidence-based, cost-effective assessment and control methods to prevent housing-related illnesses and injuries.
- **Ensure that “Green” Homes are “Healthy”:** The bill provides for a timely and comprehensive EPA evaluation of the effects of sustainable building features on indoor environmental quality and occupant health, in existing housing.
- **Coordinate Monitoring Efforts:** HUD would complete the analysis of existing data on the prevalence of health hazards in housing, which represents the first effort at capturing national trends. EPA would expand its current indoor environmental monitoring efforts, in an effort to establish baseline levels of indoor chemical pollutants in homes. A CDC center would, drawing upon existing but scattered Federal monitoring efforts, operate a coordinated, multi-data source system for housing-related hazards. Such coordination would reduce duplication of Federal efforts, and ensure sufficient data collection of both the housing conditions and the health problems in the Nation’s housing stock.
- **For Research in FY 2009: \$8 Million Authorization for CDC, \$2.5 Million Authorization for EPA, \$6.6 Million Authorization for HUD, and \$3.5 Million for Joint EPA/NIH Health Effects Research**

ENHANCING FEDERAL PROGRAM CAPACITY

- **Realign Existing HUD, CDC, and EPA Programs:** The bill would cut across the “stove-piping” of current federal programs that prevents agencies from addressing housing-related hazards in a comprehensive and cost-effective manner. It would provide statutory authority for HUD’s healthy homes program, enable CDC to expand its current lead program to also address healthy housing issues, where appropriate, and establish EPA’s Office of Children’s Health Protection as the center for EPA’s healthy housing efforts.

- **Enable Other Federal Programs to Reduce Housing-Related Hazards:** A new Health Hazard Reduction competitive grant program at HUD would provide flexible funding to applicants from other federal programs, including CDBG, HOME, weatherization assistance, low-income home energy assistance, and rural housing assistance. Reporting and record-keeping requirements for the supplemental grant program would be streamlined by building on existing requirements of the eligible program. After the first three years, HUD would evaluate the grant program's cost-effectiveness, taking into account the aggregate health, safety, energy savings, and durability benefits.
- **Build a Knowledgeable Workforce Through Effective Training:** The bill expands CDC and USDA's current training activities on housing-related hazards, and requires that each agency evaluate the effectiveness of its training activities.
- **Improve Lead Disclosure Rule Enforcement:** HUD would be allowed to exercise the same subpoena authority under the Lead Disclosure Rule that EPA currently exercises. Enforcement efforts would be more efficient.
- **For Reducing Health Hazards in Housing in FY 2009: \$18 Million Authorization for CDC, \$8 Million Authorization for EPA, \$24.8 Million Authorization for HUD, and \$1.2 Million Authorization for USDA**

EXPANDING NATIONAL OUTREACH

- **Create Market-Based Incentives:** Voluntary "Healthy Home Seal of Approval" labeling programs at EPA would evaluate and promote health protective products, materials, and criteria for new and existing housing. The program would be modeled after the Energy Star program.
- **Enhance Existing Outreach Efforts:** The bill would enhance EPA's environmental health outreach focused on the elderly, and provide funds for EPA and USDA to carry out the Food Quality Protection Act unfunded mandate to conduct integrated pest management (IPM) outreach.
- **Build Community Capacity:** A new HUD competitive grant program would allow community-level groups and national non-profits to assess need and perform outreach. Participants would also be encouraged to forge partnerships with local government and nonprofit entities, and to work towards change within existing local policy structures.
- **Launch a Tri-Agency Media Campaign:** CDC, HUD, and EPA would pool their skills and resources to establish and maintain a collaborative national media campaign to raise public awareness about hazards in housing. The agencies would perform ongoing and final evaluations of the campaign's success.
- **For Outreach in FY 2009: \$6.6 Million Authorization for EPA, \$2 Million Authorization for HUD, \$300,000 Authorization for USDA, and \$6 Million for Tri-Agency Media Campaign**